

Tales of Truth and Imagination

Generic ambiguity in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1 The authors, their works, and modernism as a literary mode.....	7
1.2 Theoretical background.....	11
1.3 Method and approach.....	18
1.4 Outline of the following chapters.....	19
2. James Joyce and <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>.....	22
2.1 The Novel.....	24
2.1.1 The bildungsroman	28
2.1.2 The künstlerroman.....	36
2.2 The pseudo-autobiography.....	45
2.2.1 (Self-)portraiture: Stephen and James.....	47
2.2.2 The role of the narrator in fictional autobiography.....	51
2.3 Joyce’s “biografiction”.....	54
3. Virginia Woolf and <i>Orlando</i>.....	56
3.1 The Novel	58
3.1.1 The bildungsroman and the künstlerroman.....	62
3.2 The pseudo-biography.....	70
3.2.1 The biographer/narrator of the mock biography.....	72
3.2.2 Manipulating the traditional biography.....	80
3.2.3 The art of biography.....	85
3.3 Woolf’s “biografiction”.....	87
4. Conclusion.....	89
Bibliography.....	98

1. Introduction

On or about December 1910 human character changed
(“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”, 320)

These words were famously uttered by Virginia Woolf in her 1924 essay «Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown». It was her way of declaring that the old certainties, norms, and restrictions of the Victorian period were gone, as modernism had entered the literary scene in the years immediately prior to the turn of the century. A new artistic era had begun, and artists and writers began to realise that the world was a place of intangibility and discontinuity, that time and space were not absolute entities, and that visual perception could be manipulated and distorted. Along with her Irish contemporary, James Joyce, Woolf was one of the chief practitioners of this period, and the date in her quote may be indicative of when she first embarked on her own modernist project. Now, a hundred years later, both authors are widely renowned for creating some of the greatest masterpieces of English literature, and as contributors the evolution of the novel during the early years of the twentieth century. This thesis will argue that the novels of Joyce and Woolf helped bring about a shift in the Irish and English literary traditions, since they both played a significant part in creating a whole new style of fiction – a fiction suffused with a constant and deliberate play with traditional genre-traits, realism, and history-writing. The thesis will present a comparative reading of one novel by Joyce and one novel by Woolf. I will explore how the two authors in their respective novels manage to transform the traditional novel by bringing in elements of other well-known genres, such as biography, autobiography, bildungsroman and künstlerroman. These are genres that otherwise can be found in works of both fiction and non-fiction, and traditionally, they are associated with a certain set of rules and conventions on how they should be carried out in literature. I will explore how these rules are being twisted and manipulated by Joyce and Woolf in order to transform the traditional genres, thus creating works of literature that go beyond the traditional novel, and become representative of the modernist movement of the early twentieth century. And consequently: can these two works of literature still be considered as novels? Or are they (auto)biographies? Or perhaps an intricate mixture of both?

1.1 The authors, their works, and Modernism as a literary mode

In order to address and discuss these problems, I have selected *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, and *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf. Sharing a global reputation, both writers are unquestionably amongst the most influential and innovative writers of the

early twentieth century, and of Irish and English literature in general. Their writing tore down the literary paradigms of the Victorian period and created entirely new ones, and the English novel was introduced to a new aesthetic that rejected the concept of realism as literature's foremost feature. They both contributed to the development of the novel, as they assumed a modernist approach to literature, thus rejecting the Victorian ideals and notions of how a narrative should be constructed. The term *modernism* is commonly used to identify the forms, concepts and styles of the literature of the last decade of the nineteenth century, and of the early twentieth century. Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*, published in its final form in 1890 is often considered to be the first modernist novel. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and even more so, *Lord Jim* are also nineteenth century contributions to the movement. The novels I am going to explore in this thesis, however, are amongst the most clear-cut and renowned works of modernism. This period in literary history saw the beginning of trends that would come to define the entire twentieth century. The term has also been used to describe the "new" Western culture of this period, as it questioned traditional modes of social organization, religion, morality and gender-roles. I support the view of modernism as a multifaceted period with no clear or obvious beginning or end. Increasingly, as several critics have noted, there is something odd about "modernism" as the designation of a period at the beginning of a previous century. Yet this particular period and concept have retained a central position in literary criticism and history. Aspects of modernism are activated and modulated by authors writing in different countries in a period covering more than fifty years. Critics have often referred to the years between 1890 and 1914 as "early modernism". The dark years of World War I represents the transition to high modernism, which is the literary high point of the movement. Thematically, modernism marked a prominent shift away from the realism and optimism that was characteristic of Victorian literature. Art and life, the individual, the importance of being instead of knowing, and the decay of social and religious norms became important motifs in the "new" fiction. Characteristic techniques and traits of the modernist aesthetic included stream-of-consciousness, discontinuous narrative, satire, and irony. These concepts are traceable in the literature of Joyce and Woolf. In addition to dealing with more or less controversial topics, they both sought to re-invent the novel and introduce it to the new modernist aesthetic. They were not afraid to make radical linguistic and narrative experiments which enabled them to transform fiction by breaking drastically with the rules of realism and history writing of the Victorian period. Their innovative styles helped raise fiction to a new level. The result was a so-called "pseudo-genre" in possession of many different

traditional generic rules and conventions that had all come together in a whole new kind of fiction, or a meta-fiction.

Born in Dublin in 1882, James Joyce stands at the centre of modernism. He published landmark novels such as *Dubliners* (1914), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) in addition to his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Significant and central characteristics of his works include the aesthetics of language, form, and content that gave rise to the term “Joycean”. This term suggests a certain difficulty and incomprehensibility, usually caused by the vast richness and complexity of Joyce’s literary language and style. His works can thus often present the reader with a considerable interpretative challenge. Joyce himself in fact boasted that he had “put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality” (qtd. in Mullin, 99). He was an author of extraordinary wit. His background, however, was far from extraordinary. He was the eldest child of an impoverished Catholic family from Dublin, and from an early age he struggled with issues of poverty and religion, class and nation. These issues, which are located at the core of his fiction, made him leave Ireland as a young man, and he spent the majority of his adult life at different locations in Europe. Nevertheless, although Joyce left Ireland, Ireland never left him. An extremely accurate account of the city of Dublin remains at the centre of his fictional universe. The location of his youth becomes the unvarying location of his fiction. Thus, Joyce was in exile and “at home” at the same time, and when asked if he would ever return to his native Ireland, he replied “Have I ever left?” (qtd. in Mullin, 100).

Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882. She was, as a member of the Bloomsbury Group and a writer of novels, short stories and essays, a prominent figure in London’s literary circles. Like Joyce, she is one of the chief practitioners of literary modernism, publishing novels such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *Orlando* (1928). As opposed to Joyce, Woolf had grown up in a family of intellectual distinction that to a large degree was associated with literature. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Virginia grew up surrounded by books. She later married Leonard Woolf, with whom she collaborated professionally. Together they founded the Hogarth Press in 1917, which published Virginia’s novels and essays. As an author, she had many complicated ideas, and she was intrigued by different human perceptions of time and space. She disliked the traditional plot-structure of the novel, as she found that it did not reflect how “real life” was experienced. She used stream-of-consciousness as a narrative method in her novels to better convey the inner life and mind of her characters. She also

experimented with time, space, and complex symbolism, thus contributing to the development of the English novel.

Originally published in 1916, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* tells the story of Joyce's fictional alter ego, Stephen Dedalus.¹ The narrative centers on his intellectual and psychological awakening, in short, his coming-of-age in a Dublin of many social and religious conventions. The story follows Stephen's childhood, his years at the Clongowes and Belvedere schools, his rebellion against religion and social convention, and his awakening as an artist that prompts him to leave Ireland. Irish history, religion and politics play a significant part throughout the narrative in the development of Stephen's consciousness. In *Portrait*, Joyce famously uses his own adolescent life as inspiration for the portrayal of Stephen. This includes elements like his family, his home, the schools he attends, his feelings about religion and the Irish society, his determination to become an artist, and his final decision to leave Ireland. The fact that Joyce's own life to such a large degree is mirrored in the life of his protagonist spawns the idea that the book is a "concealed" autobiography, or a pseudo-autobiography. However, Joyce did not craft the story of Stephen within the established autobiographical tradition. Rather, he used the novel as a "framework" for the story, and inserted aspects of the autobiography into it.

Published in 1928, *Orlando* assumes the form of a biography and portrays the life of a young boy born in England during the reign of Elizabeth I. Early on, he decides never to grow old, and instead he ages 350 years and changes sex midway. Throughout the narrative, Orlando struggles with love, gender issues and his determination to become a writer. The story leaves her in 1928, a woman, and a published writer with a husband and a child. *Orlando* is considered to be one of Woolf's more accessible works, since the narrative language is more straightforward than in novels like *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. It is frequently described as a satire, a fantasy or an escapade, and Woolf herself even described it in her diary as a "writer's holiday", adding that it would be "half laughing, half serious: with great splashes of exaggeration" (*Diary*, 168). Woolf based her protagonist on the life of her intimate friend, Vita Sackville-West, who was a constant source of inspiration to her. As the "biographer", she also drew heavily on real-life events and historical figures, balancing her narrative on a thin line between truth and fantasy. The fantastic elements of the story underline the fact that Woolf adopts a pseudo-biographical strategy in order to satirise the traditional biographical form.

¹ From now on, I will simply refer to Joyce's novel as *Portrait*

What unites the two novels is the fact that they both aim to rewrite the rules and conventions of traditional, well-known genres, in particular those of the novel and of biography. In one way, they are strikingly similar. They both use a real-life person as a model for the protagonist – Joyce uses himself as inspiration for Stephen, and Woolf uses Vita Sackville-West as inspiration for Orlando. Also, both use the genre of biography not necessarily as the primary genre, but more as a narrative technique to tell their stories, thus placing the emphasis on aesthetic form instead of being true to historical fact. In addition, both have included elements of the bildungsroman into the narrative – a narrative form that is strongly suggestive of the traditional Victorian novel. However, in the modernist period when the “art and life” approach was applied to literature, the bildungsroman has developed into a similar style, only with a slightly different focus: the künstlerroman. Thus, both Joyce and Woolf “betray” the genre of biography, as well as the novel, as fixed literary forms, and exercise a more experimental form of life writing. However, *Portrait* and *Orlando* also differ in significant ways. In Joyce’s novel, there is a strong sense of realism that Woolf’s novel is in lack of. He has weaved his own life-story into the narrative so carefully that it is impossible to determine where Stephen Dedalus ends and James Joyce begins. Is Stephen a truthful portrait of James Joyce? One will have to look for the answer in the novel’s aesthetics and subtext. *Orlando*, on the other hand, is more obviously a writer’s experiment. Woolf did not seek to emphasise realism in her novel, rather the opposite. Orlando is clearly not a realistic account of a real-life persona. Rather he/she is only a product of Woolf’s imagination combined with the inspiration provided by Vita Sackville-West. Her storyline is thus very unrealistic, and the only elements that claim realism are the historical events that Woolf uses as a backdrop for the story throughout the narrative.

As the two novels are rather dissimilar in their forms and structures, I believe that it is relevant to do a comparative reading in order to map out to which degree Joyce and Woolf are being truthful in their narratives. Consequently, this will also allow me to explore how the two authors manipulate traditional generic norms and conventions, and thus ultimately help me reach a conclusion about their impact on the evolution of the novel.

1.2 Theoretical background

Theory concerning genre, as well as narrative theory will form the theoretical basis for this thesis. In my discussion of *Portrait* and *Orlando*, I will employ a number of terms concerning genre and generic traits. The novel and the (auto)biography will be the two paramount genres of my discussion of the two novels, but I will also be using terms referring to different sub

genres and narrative theory. I am now going to give a presentation of the genres I will be referring to frequently throughout the thesis providing key terms that are relevant to the argument. I will start by giving a definition of the term *narrative*, as it is a central term in relation to the study of literature. Both novels that I am going to discuss are narratives at their cores. In fact, remarkably many texts contain a narrative, which is the story presented in the text. M. H. Abrams defines the term like this: “A narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do” (Abrams, 181). Here, narrative is defined in the simplest possible way. As I find narrative theory to be a rather vast and complex field of study, I find it relevant to further define what kind of narrative I will discuss in this thesis. In the extension of the term *narrative* we find the term *life narrative*, that is “a general term referring to any writing that tells the story of a life over time, including biographies, novels, and histories” (Hobbs, 4). The life narrative is perhaps mostly associated with biography and autobiography, but it can in fact assume many forms. This is because the term *life writing* has a much broader reference than the biography, or even the novel. Life writing exists within biography and autobiography and their sub-genres (memoirs, journals, letters family histories, etc.). It is also traceable in genres that fuse the two together by fragmenting the (auto)biography, for instance the novel. Such a blend of genres is exactly what Joyce and Woolf are practicing in *Portrait* and *Orlando*, thus weaving the concepts of truth and fiction closer and more intricately together. Both novels exemplify the life narrative as they render important events, including the psychological and social development that occurs during Stephen’s formative years in Dublin, and Orlando’s extraordinarily long lifetime on different locations in time and space.

One of the most common types of narrative, and of life narrative, is the *novel* – a genre that is applied to a large variety of texts that have in common the fact that they are extended works of fiction written in a prose style. As a concept, the novel is not easily defined, and the reason for this is the fact that it is an ever-evolving genre. Also, within the novel, there are a great variety of sub-genres, forms and styles. It is distinguished from the short story, as it is a work of greater magnitude, thus allowing for a greater variety in characters, events, milieu, as well as a more sustained exploration of characters and motives. The term novel is a very common generic marker today. However, it is important to remember that all narratives that are given this label do not always possess one common or distinctive trait that make them novels. There are a myriad of different traits that link novels together, but every novel does not necessarily contain all of them. It has been argued that the English novel to a large degree was established during the Victorian period, although the

genre saw the light of day already in the eighteenth century with the publishing of works such as *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, and *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. In the nineteenth century, when the novel consolidated its position as a literary genre, it was seen as a genre that heavily emphasised realism as its most significant genre trait. The story was then commonly told in the third-person perspective, in a more or less straightforward language, and the action revolved around the characters and the events in a chronological order. But the novel has developed significantly since the nineteenth century, much due to the modernist writers. In his essay "Epic and Novel", the Russian literary critic and one of the leading novel-theorists, Mikhail Bakhtin, argues that the novel is the only literary genre that is still undergoing a development, as it "fights for its own hegemony in literature" (Bakhtin, 4). Further, he writes that other genres, for instance the epic, are «dead» as these kinds of narrative are "already fixed forms" (Bakhtin, 4). In Bakhtin's words, "studying other genres is analogous to studying dead languages; studying the novel, on the other hand, is like studying languages that are not only alive, but still young" (Bakhtin, 4). The novel thus has the capacity to either revitalise or devour other genres, or even incorporate them into its own narrative, all while still maintaining its status as a novel. In addition, since the novel is a fairly "new" genre, it has yet to reach its highest potential. Thus, by actively partaking in the development of the novel, it seems to me that Joyce and Woolf are ahead of their time as they in their literature are already confirming Bakhtin's theories.

During the early years of modernism, the conventions of the Victorian ethos were challenged when the traditional novel started to interact with other genres. Aspects of the imagination and inner life of the characters was also given greater prominence. Thus, the novel developed into quite a heavysset genre, and the concept of realism within the novel had to be rethought. With this in mind, I argue that a stable, unchanging definition of what a novel is does not exist. Rather, it is an ever-changing, ever-evolving genre. Authors like Joyce and Woolf contributed to the notion of the novel being an indefinable genre. Joyce mixed his novel with other genres, but he also made use of the more traditional genre-trait of realism, achieving in the end a sophisticated mixture of fiction and realism:

Joyce ... determined to weave the thematic threads of his own life history into the fabric of a novel and to do so without flinching from the facts. He had formed himself in the insistence on holding out for the truth: this novel would be truthful (Johnson, x).

In fact, a contemporary critic called Joyce "a realist of the first order" (qtd. in Johnson, x). However, it is important to note that *Portrait* to a large extent is truthful, but not at all entirely

so. The fact that it is still categorised as a novel implies a certain amount of fictitious content. Woolf's novel, on the other hand, is more obviously fictitious, although it contains a number of genre traits that are characteristic of biography – a genre that claims truth. However, there are several elements of other genres in *Orlando* that can make the reader doubt its status as a novel:

The novel – but is it a novel? - satirizes the conventions of biographical and historical writing, and – worst of all for the immediate undertaking – it even includes parodies of the conventional front and back, the preface with acknowledgements and the index of names, not to mention a couple of spoof footnotes put in as it were to boot by the pseudo-editor of the pseudo-biographer (Bowlby, xii)

These are both examples of how the novel genre has been further developed by Joyce and Woolf. They shed light on how the novel developed during the modernist period, and became more complex and multifaceted. Thus, compared to the Victorian tradition, the novel became more difficult to define since the complexity also generated a certain sense of generic ambiguity.

The genres that are probably the most associated with the life narrative are the biography and autobiography. It is an old genre, and in the early seventeenth century, the English poet and literary critic, John Dryden, defined biography as “the history of particular men's lives” (qtd. in Abrams, 22). Three hundred years later, in 1911, Sidney Lee, the co-editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, wrote in his book *Principles of Biography* that “The aim of biography is not the moral edification which may flow from the survey of either vice or virtue; it is the truthful transmission of personality” (qtd. in Saunders, 286). Both definitions are still valid, although the genre has been subjected to evolution and transformation, in terms of both form and content. Biography is seen as a quintessentially Victorian genre, and the term assumes a more or less full account of a particular person's life and experiences, along with an account of said person's personality and character traits. In addition, all of this should be firmly anchored in the truth, and what really happened in the life of the biography's subject. However, like the novel and other Victorian paradigms, the genre of biography was also subjected to change at the turn of the century. Modernist authors of novels and biographies wanted to mark a shift from their Victorian predecessors by constructing the so-called “New Biography” - a genre that represented modernity and a re-invention of the generic norms of the previous century. For Woolf, it was perhaps primarily a reaction against her father, who represented the old Victorian values as editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The modernists wanted to distance their biographic

writings from the “monumental” biographies of the Victorian period, when their subjects were “great men” of history. The biographers, or “historians of life”, wrote posthumous memorialisations with a certain “dwell on the death-bed scene” (Marcus, 93), making a strong connection between biography and death instead of emphasizing the multi-faceted concept life the way it was lived. The Bloomsbury Group and Virginia Woolf were especially preoccupied with the New Biography. In her essay of that title, she wrote:

we can assure ourselves by a very simple experiment that the days of Victorian biography are over. Consider one’s own life; pass under review a few years that one has actually lived. Conceive how Lord Morley would have expounded them; how Sir Sidney Lee would have documented them; how strangely all that has been most real in them would have slipped through their fingers (“The New Biography”, 234).

Here, Woolf calls for a new, modern subjectivity. Life writing is essential to modernism, and Woolf wanted to bring more character and personality into the biographic narrative by focusing on life over death and intangible experience over dry empiricism. The biography was to be reshaped according to modernist aesthetic, by adopting the methods of modernist fiction, for instance satire and irony, to the genre. The writer of biography would ironise his subject, while conveying a sense of his or hers personality and character, although not in a strict realistic manner. Life writing of the modernist period was more ambivalent than it used to be in the previous century, which gave rise to fiction *about* biographers and biography – “*biografiction*” (Saunders, 292), which can further be categorized into a myriad of sub-strands. I will mention the two strands I will be referring to throughout my thesis. First is the *pseudo-biography*, which borrows biographical form to apply a certain quality and appearance of truth and reality to the narrative. The second strand is the *mock biography*, which is a sub form of the pseudo-biography that satirises the biographical form itself. These two strands within the form of biografiction are characteristic of the relationship, or the fusion, between the fiction and biography of the early twentieth century. According to Woolf, the truth of real life and the truth of fiction are explosively antagonistic, and as she articulates in her essay “The New Biography”, “the imagination will not serve under two masters simultaneously” (“The New Biography”, 234). Nevertheless, this proved to be an increasing trend in the literary imagination of the modernist period, with Joyce and Woolf as its pioneers.

The autobiographical tradition did not undergo the same paradigm-shift at the beginning of the twentieth century as the biography. This is mainly because the autobiography for years had been regarded as a literary form that could not necessarily be trusted, as the author and subject could be self deceptive or self indulgent in the characterisations of

themselves. Arguably, the fictional elements are almost “built into” autobiographical writing. Thus, unlike “biografiction”, “autobiografiction” did already exist as the boundaries between fiction and autobiography has always been unclear. French scholar of autobiography Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography thus: “Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular, the story of his personality” (qtd. in Hobbs, 3). According to this definition, the author and the autobiographical subject must be identical, and the narrative should include the concept of the life course. The German scholar and philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, is frequently considered to be the founder of the scholarly approach to autobiography. He has stated that “in autobiography we encounter the highest and most instructive form of the understanding of life” (qtd. in Marcus, 137). He further states:

Autobiography is merely the literary expression of a man’s reflection on his life. Every individual reflects, more or less, on his life. Such reflection is always present and expresses itself in ever new forms. ... Combined with an infinite desire to surrender to, and lose oneself in, the existence of others, it makes the great historian. (qtd. in Marcus, 137)

Dilthey draws a parallel between the autobiography and self reflection, the biographer and the historian. These parallels are highly present in both *Portrait* and *Orlando*. Joyce is reflecting upon his own formative years in Dublin whilst at the same time accounting for the historical, political, and social climate in his native Ireland at the time. Although not an autobiography, but rather a regular biography, Dilthey’s point is also applicable to *Orlando*. The biographer-historian aspect is even more evident in Woolf’s novel than in Joyce’s, as she renders 350 years of English history throughout the narrative. These aspects of self reflection and history all imply a certain degree of truthfulness in the two texts.

Few writers of the modernist movement wrote autobiographies, and even less published autobiographies that solely focused on truth. In the nineteenth century, fiction impersonated autobiography, as the genre was used to create a first-person narrative of someone else’s life, or even fictional life. Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* is a typical example of this. Dickens tells the fictional life story of the protagonist in the first-person narrative, thus limiting the viewpoint only to David’s experiences and attitudes. This narrative technique makes the novel appear as if it were an authentic autobiography. The autobiographies written by modernists, on the other hand, to a large degree impersonate fiction. The modernists rarely favour the first-person narrative. Also, fictional characteristics are frequently applied to the narrative, and they become meta-(auto)biographies.

I will now introduce a concept I found to be most commonly linked to fiction, as well as another concept that I take to be the modernist extension of the first one. These concepts are the *bildungsroman* and the *künstlerroman*, and it is impossible to understand the second term without being familiar with the first. The *bildungsroman* can be described as a sub genre to the novel that nineteenth century Victorian writers, such as Dickens, used when writing autobiographical fiction. It is a German term for a kind of narrative that signifies “novel of formation” or “novel of education”. The German term “bildung” signifies the “institutionalization of self-cultivation” (Castle, 1), which are concepts that are more commonly referred to as “coming of age” or “rites of passage”. This kind of novel deals with the protagonist’s development from childhood into adulthood and maturity. Through varied experiences, and often through a spiritual crisis, the protagonist’s mind and character is shaped, and the novel ends with him/her recognising his/her identity and role in the society. He/she thus becomes a well-rounded individual who is in possession of both wisdom and knowledge concerning the ways of the world. The nineteenth century English *bildungsroman* was a genre heavily concerned with the pragmatics of social class and upwards mobility. The spiritual development often relied on the protagonist (usually a young man) becoming a gentleman through a rite of passage. When the modernist *bildungsroman* emerged during the 1890s, the meaning of the term “bildung” changed:

In the modernist *Bildungsroman*, Bildung so often turns out to be a dissent from social order, from the bourgeois appropriation of self-cultivation, a dissent as well from the ideas of pedagogy and parenting that sanction restrictive and punitive models of development. Precisely those elements that demanded stability and predictable development in the classical *Bildungsroman* – harmonious identity-formation, aesthetic education, meaningful and rewarding social relations, a vocation – became problematic in the twentieth century (Castle, 24).

The term “bildung” is still an ideal for the protagonist of the modernist *bildungsroman*. However, if he/she fails to arrive at a state of self-recognition towards the end of the narrative, it is due to a failure of the social conditions that govern their coming-of-age process.

While the *bildungsroman* is a sub genre of the novel, the *künstlerroman* is a sub genre of the *bildungsroman*. When the *bildungsroman* became increasingly modernist in the beginning of the twentieth century, it often took the form of the *künstlerroman*, which can be described as the growth and education of an artist from childhood, into maturity and recognition of the protagonist’s artistic destiny. Thus, the *künstlerroman* can be seen as an “extension” to the more traditional *bildungsroman*, which is also a more general literary form.

The *künstlerroman* is more precise, as its protagonist is always an artist. Consequently, there is an interesting dynamic to be traced in this type of narrative. Roberta Seret, a scholar on the *künstlerroman*, argues:

As the artist-protagonist travels through various experiences, the artist-author travels simultaneously alongside him, but does so in an opposite direction; the artist-author travels from present to past, instead of past to present, and in doing so revisits his youth. ... the author of the *Künstlerroman* attempts to analyze his youth, (Seret, 4)

For the author of the *künstlerroman*, then, the narrative becomes a voyage back in time, and a reflection on his/her own coming-of-age process as an artist. This is, in my opinion, where the fictional and truthful accounts of a life narrative have the capacity to overlap. The *künstlerroman* can be (auto)biographical and borrow aspects from real life, and thus provide the novel with non-fictitious elements.

1.3 Method and approach

Because my two novels of choice are considered to be amongst the most famous and ground-breaking novels, not only of modernism, but of English literature in general, a myriad of writing and criticism already exists on them. Consequently, it has been hard, if not impossible, for me to find a focus that has not already been addressed in articles, books, scholarly debates etc. With that being said, I do feel that I have been able to find an approach, and an interesting link between the two novels that is worthy of discussion. To my knowledge, *Portrait* and *Orlando* have not been discussed much in the same context. Hence, as I have already mentioned, I think that a comparative analysis can be enlightening, as well as more relevant and rewarding than singular readings. The comparative analysis will help me discover and explore Joyce and Woolf's different approaches to realism, as well as their use of generic traits characteristic of the novel and the (auto)biography, in order to ultimately establish a hybrid genre consisting of aspects of both genres.

As already indicated, the main focus of this thesis will be on genres, and how they are executed by Joyce and Woolf in their respective novels. Taking into consideration the problem at hand, I feel that a close reading of the two texts is absolutely necessary to map out how the different genres are being executed in the two works. I mean to stay close to the texts throughout my discussion to attempt to unveil how Joyce and Woolf manipulate the genres present in *Portrait* and *Orlando*. Thus, I will do my close reading with an eye to the genres in question – the novel, the bildungs- and *künstlerroman*, and the autobiography and biography. It will also be based on empiricism and various facts related to historical events referred to in

the novels, as well as relevant biographical information related to Joyce and Vita Sackville-West as the biographical “subjects”. It is also worth mentioning that throughout my thesis I am consistently going to refer to the two works as novels. The main reason for this is the fact that they are today both commonly labeled as such – a fact that is also very much indicative of the influence of these literary works. Another reason is that one of my premises for my thesis is that Joyce and Woolf were both novelists at their core, and that although genre ambiguous, *Portrait* and *Orlando* are both consistently working *within* the novel genre.

In my discussion of the two novels, I am also going to incorporate theories and viewpoints provided by a selection of the vast plethora of previously published articles, essays, and books on the authorships and works of Joyce and Woolf. My aim is to include some of the many different viewpoints concerning the artistic endeavours of Joyce and Woolf, to better shed light on their literary achievements, as well as the possibilities that modernism represented in the regeneration of the novel at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gregory Castle’s theories on the modern bildungsroman and Roberta Seret’s theories on the modern künstlerroman will be important in the discussions of *Portrait* and *Orlando* as novels, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin’s famous novel-theory. In my discussions of the two novels as (auto)biographies, I am going to use a number of different theories on the genre, in addition to theories of a selection of scholars who have pointed out the (auto)biographical aspects in *Portrait* and *Orlando*. In my chapter on Woolf and her novel, I am going to use her own essays on modern fiction and biography to better understand the choices she made concerning genre in *Orlando*. I also find it relevant to include some of the contemporary criticism of both novels, as it sheds light on the literary debate of the early twentieth century, as well as providing us with insights into how the novels were received amongst literary critics and the contemporary reading public. My aim with the thesis, along with shedding light on how Joyce and Woolf manipulated traditional genre-traits, both novelistic and biographical, is to map out how they manage to create “new” pseudo-genres that has been transformed and re-shaped in accordance with the modernist aesthetic. Further, I will also demonstrate how this re-generation of the previous generic norms is indicative of the development of the novel in the modernist period.

1.4 Outline of the following chapters

I have divided the thesis into four chapters, the first one being the introduction. The following two chapters are each dedicated to one of the authors and his/her novel. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I will bring the two novels together in a comparative analysis prior to the conclusion.

The second chapter will concern itself with James Joyce and his *Portrait*, as it was written fourteen years prior to *Orlando*. It thus precedes Woolf's work both chronologically, and in my opinion stylistically, as it represents modernism at an early stage. In *Portrait*, Joyce plays with the traditional generic conventions of the novel by weaving aspects of autobiography into the narrative. However, he is subtle in his artistic craft, and the narrative never seems to be a novel, as the structure and discourse are never explicitly autobiographical.

The third chapter of the thesis will deal with Woolf's *Orlando*, a novel written during high modernism. Although it deals with the same subject-matter as *Portrait*, being a pseudo-biographical coming-of-age story of a real life person, it differs prominently as the generic traits are more those of a biography than a novel. Yet it combines fantasy and imagination with realism, which consequently enhances the novel's qualities as fiction. The fact that *Orlando* is more openly experimental than *Portrait* is indicative of the evolution of modernist literature, and the development of the Victorian novel into a modernist aesthetic.

The fourth and last chapter of my thesis will feature a comparison of the readings of my two chosen novels. Here, I am going to discuss narrative and generic similarities as well as notable differences between the two novels. I am also going to discuss the presence of the modernist aesthetic in the two texts, and how the two authors contributed to the development of the novel at this crucial point in literary history before I offer my conclusion to the questions I have discussed throughout the thesis.

I feel that it is important to mention that I will go about addressing the two novels in a slightly different manner. To a large degree, my two main chapters (number two and three) are quite similarly structured, as they start with a presentation of the plot before the main discussion begins. In both chapters, I am going to start by addressing the text as a novel, the bildungsroman, and the künstlerroman, before I discuss it in terms of the (auto)biography. However, the two texts give a very different prominence to the genres, and this influences my discussions. In the case of *Portrait*, I have decided to give the greatest attention to the discussion of the text as a novel. This is because the autobiographical aspects are more or less concealed, and the novelistic traits are thus more striking. Here, I will also discuss the bildungsroman aspects and the künstlerroman aspects separately. In the case of *Orlando*, it is the other way around. Woolf has focused a great deal more on the biographical aspects than Joyce, so much that her novel almost claims to be a "real" biography. Similar to *Portrait*, I will start with a discussion of the novel, the bildungsroman, and the künstlerroman. However, I will discuss the two latter terms simultaneously, as the two are more closely interfused than in Joyce's novel. Further, *Orlando* as a biography is going to receive more attention in my

discussion than *Orlando* as a novel. With this being said, I also feel that it is relevant to mention that the two texts are going to be given equal attention in the comparison in the last chapter. Finally, due to the fact that I have moved the main body of the comparative analysis into the concluding chapter, it is consequently going to be somewhat longer than what is common for a thesis conclusion.

2. James Joyce and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo.... (5)

These are the famous opening words of James Joyce's first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Interestingly, already in this very first sentence of the narrative, a certain sense of generic ambiguity is communicated to the reader. Joyce has chosen the famous "Once upon a time" opening for his novel, an opening that strongly suggests that the narrative that is to follow is a fairy-tale. However, *Portrait* is definitely not a fairy-tale. It is rather Joyce's "portraiture" of Irish society at the end of the nineteenth century, Catholicism, and the Irish educational system. It is also a portrayal of a child growing through adolescence into manhood and maturity, and the formative years of a young and aspiring artist-to-be. The narrative is arranged into five sequences or chapters, each representing a phase in the young life of Stephen Dedalus, who is often referred to as Joyce's fictional alter-ego. This is due to the fact that Joyce used his own adolescent life as inspiration for Stephen's coming-of-age story. Chapter I deals with Stephen's early childhood and his life at Clongowes Wood College, and the Christmas dinner at home with his family in Bray before he returns to school. In chapter II, Stephen has left Clongowes, and his family has moved to Blackrock. He now attends Dublin's Belvedere College, and strives with a burgeoning sexuality, writing verses to an unnamed "temptress", E. C. Throughout the chapter, his family moves to first one, then another address in Dublin, and it ends with Stephen's visit to a prostitute and entrance into mortal sin. Chapter III is entirely devoted to Stephen's religious reawakening as, still in mortal sin, he attends a retreat with his classmates from the Belvedere school. Father Arnall's detailed sermon on the torments of Hell stirs a feeling of guilt in Stephen, and the chapter ends with him confessing his sins to a priest. In chapter IV, Stephen experiences a slow disintegration of his new-found religious commitment. Rather, he opts for art and university. The chapter ends with a magnificent and important scene by the seashore where Stephen encounters a young woman who is wading in the shallow water. This, to him extraordinary vision, works as a catalyst for his calling as an artist. In chapter V, the concluding chapter, Stephen decides to free himself from his family, friends, religion and nationality to become an artist. He has important conversations with his friends Davin and Cranly concerning matters like nationalism, politics, religion, and artistic theory. As he experiences Irish society to be

too restrictive, he chooses exile, and in the end leaves Ireland to experience life more freely, and to finally become an artist.

From this perspective, the novel is a typical novel of development, or a bildungsroman. This is a kind of narrative that focuses on the protagonist's life from his or her birth and early childhood, through adolescence, and finally culminating with the entrance into adulthood and maturity, in short: his/her formative years. The bildungsroman focuses on the different experiences of the protagonist, both positive and negative, that influence the formation of character. In the end, the protagonist is able to make informed decisions concerning his/her own life, as he/she has gained valuable life experience throughout the process of bildung. As an extension of the traditional bildungsroman, we have the concept of the künstlerroman. These two concepts share a number of important similarities in that they are both novels of formation. The significant difference is that while the bildungsroman mainly is concerned with the *personal* development of the protagonist, the künstlerroman typically represents the growth of an *artist* from childhood into the stage of maturity, recognition of his/her own artistic destiny, and finally learning to master an artistic craft. The story of Stephen, however skillfully crafted within the pattern of both the bildungsroman and the künstlerroman, cannot exclusively be described as such. This is because elements inspired by Joyce's own life figures prominently in the narrative as well, thus providing the book with certain autobiographical aspects. The fact that the young James and Stephen grew up in the same milieu, went to the same schools, and had families in possession of strikingly similar characteristics and dynamics, ties the narrative of *Portrait* closer to the genre of the autobiography. Autobiography is commonly seen as a genre that to a large degree claims reality, in that the sense of purporting to reliably present significant aspects of the author's life. However, based on its novel-like development of structure, characters, and plot, it can also be argued that it is possible to locate the autobiography within the novel genre. The realistic aspects of the autobiography contribute to the positioning of the genre only on the outskirts of the novel, but nevertheless, the two genres are mutually entangled. The title itself, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* suggests portraiture – an established tradition in the European visual arts and literature. The bildungsroman, a form of narrative that figures quite prominently in the novel, is also a great European tradition. It can thus be argued that Joyce is very conventional in *Portrait*. However, he has arranged the autobiographical details so carefully into the aesthetic pattern of modernism that it becomes impossible to read the novel as a truthful account of Joyce's own life. He favours art over realism, and the result is a “new” genre possessed of traits both from the novel and the autobiography. In this chapter, I am

going to discuss *Portrait* in context of the novel and the autobiography by exploring different generic traits characteristic of the two genres. I am going to take a closer look at how the book fits in with various definitions, traditional and new, of what a novel is. In this part of the discussion, I also want to discuss how the bildungsroman manifests itself in the narrative, both in terms of theme and structure, before I turn my attention to the künstlerroman aspects. Having done this, I am going to explore how it embodies autobiographical aspects as well. Central to my discussion will be how Joyce draws significantly on his own youthful experiences to create a successful portrait of Stephen Dedalus as an artist-to-be, as well as the role of the narrator/biographer in a pseudo-autobiography. Finally, as a conclusion to the chapter, I will consider whether – and if so, how – Joyce’s first novel can be described as an aesthetic metamorphosis of previously established literary forms.

2.1 The novel

Today, *Portrait* is commonly referred to as a novel, or a work of fiction. Contemporary critics even consider it to be quite conventional in terms of narrative form, as opposed to how it was seen upon its first publication in the modernist literary magazine, *The Egoist*, in 1914-15. Joyce’s experimental narrative language and discourse, not to mention the autobiographical aspects of the novel, made the early readers and critics of *Portrait* doubt whether Joyce’s first novel was, in fact, a novel. Consequently, the novel prompted many ambivalent responses. A reader for the British publishing house Duckworth and Company, Edward Garnett, thought Joyce’s first novel to be advancing beyond the naturalistic fiction of the past. However, its complexity, artistry, and stylistic diversity “renders interpretation impossible in ‘conventional’ terms” (Spinks, 159), as well as establishing “a barrier between the (presumably well-educated) ‘publisher’s reader’ and the ‘ordinary man among the reading public’ unversed in the subtleties of the avant-garde” (Spinks, 159). In other words, some of Joyce’s contemporary critics definitely did not perceive *Portrait* to be an accessible novel. Bearing in mind the traditions of the previous century, they even considered the novel to be “too unconventional” (Spinks, 159) to pass for a novel. The American poet and critic, Ezra Pound, on the other hand, supported Joyce’s work. Responding to Garnett’s criticism, he simply said: “Hark to this puling squeek. Too ‘unconventional’. What in hell do we want but some change from the unbearable monotony of the weekly six shilling pear’s soap annual novel...” (Spinks, 159). This debate effectively illustrates that a dispute concerning whether it was legitimate to apply the term “novel” to Joyce’s work really existed. The opening passage

of the book, however, insists on *Portrait*'s status as a novel. In my introduction to this chapter, I mentioned that Joyce suggested genre ambiguity already in the first sentence by selecting the opening words "Once upon a time". However, the opening phrase is multi-layered. In addition to indicating that what is to follow is a *story*, the opening words form a meta-commentary on the entire text. They signal to the reader that the novel is aware of its own status as a novel, as a narrative, and as a fictional text. What is to follow is thus not a mere transcription of the truth, because the novel in its own way announces that it *knows* that it is a novel. Knowing that the narrative incorporates aspects of other genres as well, a point I will be returning to in my discussion of the bildungsroman and künstlerroman, the term "novel" thus proves to be quite an extensive term in the case of *Portrait* due to Joyce's treatment of its vast possibilities. It is a term that is extremely integrated in our notion of literature, but it has always been hard to define, as it traditionally has been defined on the basis of other, more well-defined genres. In *Portrait*, the novel extends into the realm of other established genres as well, which means that the "boundaries" of the novel have become quite blurry and sometimes indistinguishable. In the introduction I also mentioned that the novel is a genre in development, which is also a reason why it is so hard to define. In *Portrait*, Joyce takes advantage of the development aspect and the fact that the genre lacks clear-cut "boundaries" in relations to narrative structure, theme, and the treatment of truth and imagination. As a writer, he is thus emancipated from the restriction of the previous norms.

A plausible question in the debate concerning the novel's capacities would be: What can a novel *be*? And thus: what can *Portrait* be? In the case of Joyce's work, the Victorian definition of the novel being an individual life story told within a coherent, realistic world cannot serve as a descriptive and well informed definition of the novel. As I mentioned in my introduction, there are a number of different traits that are present in many novels; however, that does not automatically mean that these traits are present in *all* novels, as the novel is a flexible genre. Rather, the novel tends to establish itself based on resemblances and recurrent patterns that can be found in constellations of works of the same genre, for example novels written within the same literary period. In the case of *Portrait*, the common denominator are novels written in the modernist tradition, borrowing traits and techniques from other, more established literary genres. Of course, there are techniques of modernist writing that the majority of the literary works from this period have in common. The stream-of-consciousness method is one of them, the blend of and play with genres is another, and both these techniques are highly present in *Portrait*. This is in accordance with Bakhtin's point about the novel being a genre in development – a point I mentioned in the introduction. He claims that the

novel by no means is a “finished genre”, rather; it is ever-evolving, and it often borrows traits from older and more established literary genres. On Bakhtin’s view, this is why the novel traditionally has been so hard to define, and in his essay “Epic and Novel”, he compares the novel with the established genre of the epic to shed light on this problem. He introduces the essay by stating that “the generic skeleton of the novel is still far from having hardened, and we cannot foresee all its plastic possibilities” (Bakhtin, 3), thus suggesting a potential for further development for the novel – a potential that the epic genre lacks as its form is forever established and cannot develop any further. He goes on to refer to a process of “disintegration” that is going on among all the major, established genres of literature. The novel is in a unique position in this context, as it, in Bakhtin’s words

parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, re-formulating and re-accentuating them. (Bakhtin, 5)

In other words, there is a mutual interaction going on between the different established genres in literature, all contributing to the development of the novel. Thus, I argue that the novel is a genre of vast potential, and it is the task of each individual writer of fiction to create his or her own concept of the novel, and decide what his or her novel should be. With *Portrait*, Joyce is well on his way in exploring the potential of the novel by re-inventing it in his own language and generic form. As he found the formal demands of the traditional Victorian novel restricting, he invented new stylistic techniques to better reflect his ideas and experiences in the novel. Taking advantage of the fact that the novel could be molded in many different ways, Joyce was able to create a literary style that was, and still is, purely “Joycean” - a term that suggests not only complexity and even inaccessibility, but also artistry and inventiveness.

The novel is frequently referred to as the youngest of the established literary genres. In English literature, the rise of the novel occurred during the course of the nineteenth century. As it is such a “young” genre in addition to not being the only prose genre, it has been argued that “within the field of prose genres the Novel seems to be the one with the least distinctive genre traits when it comes to the recurrence of formal structures. It is difficult to determine any essential traits of prose to be found exclusively in the Novel” (Simonsen, Huang, Thomsen, 3). This is, in my opinion, a rather bold statement that I find quite difficult to agree with, especially considering the history of the novel. If the nineteenth century in fact marks the rise of the English novel, it also marks the rise of a sub genre that I understand to be quite exclusive to the novel genre or prosaic life narratives of a certain length - the bildungsroman

tradition. Although it is a term that generally signifies a genre within a genre, I still think that it can be constituted as a generic trait. This is because it greatly affects the construction of the life narrative, often following a certain “pattern” in terms of plot development and final outcome of the events in the novel. In the introduction, I stated that in the nineteenth century fiction impersonated the (auto)biography. I argue that this impersonation manifests itself in the bildungsroman form, as the coming-of-age narrative is frequent in biographical writing. However, the bildungsroman is not applicable to all genres. For instance poems, short stories, essays etc. obviously cannot take the form of a bildungsroman. Neither can the “dead” genre of Bakhtin, the epic. The epic can be defined as “a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or ... the human race” (Abrams, 81). This means that the subject matter differs from that of the bildungsroman. While the bildungsroman follows the protagonist’s development into maturity, the epic follows the protagonist on a heroic quest that will ultimately alter or save the lives of many. The “journey” made by the protagonist in a bildungsroman concerns only his/her own life, while in the case of the epic hero, it concerns the lives of many. The bildungsroman and the epic are thus not compatible. Furthermore, Stephen Dedalus is not an epic hero, he is a young, and in various ways flawed Irishman with artistic aspirations. This strengthens *Portrait*’s status as a novel.

In *Portrait*, Joyce is concerned with the young man *and* the aspiring artist – two categories which are both manifested in Stephen’s character. Thus, Joyce’s portraiture has a certain duality to it. The novel can be described as both a depiction and a demonstration of the artist. Hence, the novel is a portrait of both the artist as well as a portrait of Joyce himself. The paramount theme of the novel, however, is the formation of character, and for the protagonist this formation occurs on two different levels. He develops and matures as a young man in addition to his artistic growth as a writer-to-be. In the first four chapters of the novel, the narrative is mainly concerned with Bildung, and Stephen’s growth from infancy into manhood. The artistic aspect is very much present in these parts as well, but it is not until the very last chapter that the artist really emerges in Stephen. I am now going to discuss the bildungsroman and künstlerroman, as both concepts are important in the development of the protagonist’s character. I will look at how these traditional concepts are being realised and balanced in the narrative, as well as how they contribute to the formation of the novel in the modernist tradition.

2.1.1 The Bildungsroman

When Joyce started writing *Portrait* in the early twentieth century, the bildungsroman was an established genre with traditions reaching back to the eighteenth century. This provided him with the opportunity to locate his protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, within the same literary tradition as famous characters like Wilhelm Meister, David Copperfield, and Jane Eyre. It is peculiar that an author in possession of such inventiveness and originality as Joyce seemingly chooses to follow the Victorian conventions, and link his novel to such a traditional literary form as the bildungsroman. However, Stephen's experience of bildung differs from that of the famous characters from the nineteenth century. Although this difference may not be obvious, it is significant. As a bildungsroman, the novel revolves around the protagonist, tracing the personal growth and development of Stephen until the end of the narrative where he has arrived at a point of self-awareness and self-determination. The formal education he is receiving at the Clongowes and Belvedere schools is an important part of the process of his coming-of-age, but it is definitely not the most determining factor in his personal development. His education at school is supplemented by a variety of different religious, social, sexual, and artistic experiences that are equally, and possibly more important in his growing into wisdom and maturity. It is "the sum of lived experience which makes up the whole man, and makes him whole" (Mitchell, 61). This is in accordance with the tradition, as these are common themes in any bildungsroman. However, it was not the subject matter in itself that Joyce attempted to re-invent. *Portrait* is in fact surprisingly conventional in the literal sense of the term, and the author pays homage to a great European literary tradition. However, the style mainly functions as an outer framework for the novel in which Joyce more or less subtly exercises different modernist techniques. He also concerns himself with the inner development of his protagonist and his relationship with society, the latter traditionally being an important aspect of the genre. The bildungsroman offers an approach to many of the most important facets of *Portrait*, although many of Joyce's contributions to modernism surfaces in this novel as well. The essential point I want to make here is that *Portrait* balances itself between convention and innovation within the European literary context.

The most important and defining aspects of Stephen's early life are introduced already in the first chapter when his personality is that of a young, naïve Catholic boy growing up in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. Forces like politics, society, and religion still play a significant part in his life already at an early stage in his life, even though he is not yet fully capable of understanding the meaning and significance of these issues. He is a small child in the first chapter, which is reflected in the childish language and occasional "baby talk". But

during the Christmas dinner scene, a significant event in the first chapter, the adult discussion around the table throws him into the world of politics and religion, and he learns how destructive these forces can be. For the first time, the young Stephen is allowed to join the adults for dinner, which in itself is a milestone event in his coming-of-age. This experience also represents his growing awareness of the “outside world” as he witnesses a dispute between his father and their guests that introduces the landscape of late nineteenth century politics to him. Harsh words about the death of the Irish parliamentary leader, Parnell, and about Protestantism and Catholicism are uttered by Stephen’s father and their guests, Dante Riordan and Mr. Casey, though it occurs to them that the young Stephen is also at the table, their words are by no means softened:

- O, he’ll remember all this when he grows up, said Dante hotly – the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home.
- Let him remember too, cried Mr Casey to her from across the table, the language with which the priests and the priests’ pawns broke Parnell’s heart and hounded him into his grave. Let him remember that too when he grows up.
- Sons of bitches! cried Mr Dedalus. When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer. Lowlived dogs! And they took it! By Christ, they took it! (28)

Stephen is baffled by this scene where the Catholic Dante and the secularists Mr. Dedalus and Mr. Casey argue fiercely. There is no harmony or Christmas spirit in this scene, and Stephen learns that adult life is filled with conflict, disharmony, and doubt. Still a child, Stephen’s perspectives on the issues in the argument are limited. Nevertheless, witnessing the dispute, he “felt the glow rise to his own cheek as the spoken words thrilled him” (32). This is indicative of the fact that powerful emotions concerning issues like politics and religion dwell within the little boy, and are thus going to mark his character throughout the narrative.

In some aspect, Stephen resembles the traditional bildungsroman hero. In common with a typical protagonist of the genre, Stephen is frequently preoccupied with gaining a sense of himself. Already quite early on, during his years at Clongowes, he attempts to identify himself and determine his place in a concrete world. During a geography lesson, he writes on a flyleaf: “*Stephen Dedalus, Class of Elements, Clongowes Wood College, Sallins, County Kildare, Ireland, Europe, The World, The Universe*” (12), and his friend, Fleming, had written on the opposite page: “*Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation. Clongowes is my dwellingplace, And heaven my expectation*” (12). These writings give him an impression of how big the universe is, and how small he is. They also underline his feelings of isolation and separation, and even stir philosophical ponderings as “It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended. He felt small and

weak” (13). Stephen is bewildered about the world, and silently meditates on religion and the vastness of the universe. These are notions that reflect his general feelings of disintegration and alienation from his surroundings. His life at school is suffused with a feeling of “otherness”, as he recognizes that he is different from his classmates. As a young boy, he is unable to understand why the other boys laugh at him when he says he kisses his mother at night, and even when he says he does not do so: “Stephen tried to laugh with them. He felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment. What was the right answer to the question?” (11). Here, it becomes obvious to the reader that the young Stephen has not yet learned that he is faced with a no-win situation, since there is no right answer to the question. The fact that he is unable to grasp this furthers his feeling of alienation from the other boys at Clongowes.

The traditional bildungsroman hero is often cut off from society as a result of poverty or inferiority of birth. To a certain degree, Stephen is too, as he comes from an impoverished family. However, it is important to keep in mind that the bildungsroman of modernist fiction emphasizes a *spiritual* distance² instead of an *actual* distance. The significant difference between the two is that while actual distance refers to a physical and geographical distance, spiritual distance is an abstract concept. In Stephen’s case, the spiritual distance he is experiencing, is primarily prompted by his feelings of alienation and disintegration from the society he is expected to adapt himself to. A spiritual distance is the definition of what he feels towards his classmates, and even his family. In the physical sphere he is still close to them but in the spiritual sphere, there is a considerable distance between him and the people in his world. In the second chapter, he recognizes this spiritual distance. Interacting with the world around him, Stephen also recognizes that his spiritual “otherness” is not determined by economic factors like his family’s lack of wealth. This differs from the traditional bildungsroman, for instance *Great Expectations* or *Jane Eyre*, where the lack of wealth represents a more crucial and literal exclusion from society. Stephen, not yet sixteen years of age, realizes the form of his “exclusion” on a trip to Cork with his father. He painfully has to witness his father’s degradation, as he is in the process of losing his properties. When Mr. Dedalus and two of his friends are carousing at a pub in Cork, Stephen realises that “His mind seemed older than theirs: it shone coldly on their strifes and happiness and regrets like a moon upon a younger earth. No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them” (80). Here, he is unable to relate to his father and his friends, he is “othered” in their company. Moreover, although still a young boy, he thinks of his childhood as “dead or lost and with it his soul

² “Distance” is here referring to the protagonist’s feelings of detachment and alienation from the various aspects of his life.

capable of simple joys, and he was drifting amid like the barren shell of the moon” (80). Stephen’s struggle to gain a sense of himself, along with the knowledge of his own growth into maturity, has made him part with his childhood. In fact, an important aspect of Stephen’s character that distinguishes him from other protagonists of the bildungsroman is his sensitivity to the very concept of growth and development. It has been argued that “he is acutely aware of the rapid disappearance of his past self from moment to moment” (Mitchell, 68). Stephen knows that he is constantly changing, and this is a part of the formation of his self-awareness. He also learns that wealth alone cannot undo the disintegration he feels towards his family, and bring him closer to them. Towards the end of the chapter he cashes a check for thirty-three pounds that he has received as a prize for an essay that he has written. He then decides to take his family to dinner at a fancy restaurant, and “for a swift season of merrymaking, the money of his prizes ran through Stephen’s fingers” (82). His attempt to close the spiritual distance between himself and his family by indulging them in lavish treats proves to be unsuccessful. The experience becomes a valuable lesson for Stephen, who feels more isolated than ever before:

How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless ... He saw clearly too his isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach nor bridged the restless shame and rancour that divided him from mother and brother and sister (82).

His situation cannot be altered by wealth and material riches. He is not even able to establish a temporary bond between himself and his family. In the traditional Victorian bildungsroman everything revolve around the upwards mobility of the protagonist and his development towards becoming a gentleman, thus leading a prosperous and wealthy life. Money, riches and property are intimately connected with success and prosperity. For Stephen, however, living a prosperous life takes on quite a different meaning later on in the narrative.

The texture of Stephen’s everyday life influences him in different ways, and he is forced to make many choices throughout. These choices are crucial to his development and growth and contribute greatly to the formation of his character. Towards the end of the second chapter, Stephen falls into mortal sin as he has a sexual encounter with a prostitute. At the beginning of the third chapter his thoughts frequently return to the brothels, and it is indicated that he has returned there on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, he is fully aware of his sins:

He had sinned mortally not once but many times and he knew that, while he stood in danger of eternal damnation for the first sin alone, by every

succeeding sin he multiplied his guilt and his punishment. His days and works and thoughts could make no atonement for him, the fountains of sanctifying grace having ceased to refresh his soul. (87)

Stephen is not ignorant of what he has done and Father Arnall's powerful sermon on the torments of hell functions as a catalyst for his feelings of guilt. The entire third chapter thus represents a religious awakening for Stephen as he has fallen into a life of degeneration. The chapter ends with him confessing his sins to an old priest. The third chapter is a momentous and famous part of the book. It represents a crucial stage in Stephen's coming-of-age because he seems to have an important religious experience. As he confesses his sins at the end of the chapter, it is indicated to the reader that Stephen has gained important insights about his life and that he is determined to commit himself fully to the church and to Catholicism: "Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness! It was true. It was not a dream from which he would wake. The past was past" (123). However, in the fourth chapter, his religious and moral awakening proves to be only temporal, and represents a mere stage in his spiritual growth. Although Stephen has imposed a new religious discipline upon himself, he has not yet made a choice about his higher calling in life. This becomes clear when the director of the Jesuit school calls him into a meeting and urges him to consider joining the order, and become a priest. Stephen is intrigued when the director stresses that "to receive that call ... is the greatest honour that the Almighty God can bestow upon a man" (133). However, he soon realises that this is not his true calling, since his religious vocation has been replaced by something else. This is the point in the story where the *bildungsroman* gradually turns into the *künstlerroman*, as Stephen's real vocation suddenly becomes clear to him towards the end of the chapter. His epiphanic vision of the "seabird girl" at the seashore is the real turning-point of his life and will come to determine his path onwards. Already before this encounter, he has a realisation that priesthood is his true calling after all:

He would never swing the thurible before the tabernacle as a priest. His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world. (136)

Thus his rebellion against the social, political and religious forces has begun. Another fate is in store for him, and the rest of the fourth chapter along with the entire fifth chapter is devoted to Stephen's true vocation in life – art. This I am going to explore further in my discussion of the *künstlerroman*.

It is clear that *Portrait* shares many characteristics with the traditional bildungsroman, and it is even possible to read the novel entirely as a contribution to this genre. Thus, I argue that Joyce was consciously working within the tradition, which is entirely possible considering the fact that Stephen's development, however spiritual, is the main focus in the novel. Throughout the narrative, Joyce consistently stays close to the conventions of the genre. And yet, *Portrait* differs prominently from the traditional Victorian bildungsroman, and the reason why is that Joyce did not simply adapt a set of already existing rules and conventions to his novel but rather "used the *Bildungsroman* model to attack implicitly the notion of bildung while at the same time enlarging upon the narrative possibilities inherent in the form" (Mitchell, 70). Gregory Castle makes a similar claim:

Portrait manages to retain and even emulate the formal structures of a genre whose conceptual foundations and thematic concerns are at the same time subjected to critique and revision. Joyce does this not primarily by altering the structure of the Bildung plot in some subversive way but by narrating new norms of development, new scenes of acculturation and education, that test the limits and critique the various components of the classical Bildungsroman. (Castle, 164)

I agree with the claims being made in these quotes, as I find that Joyce's novel both takes the form of a bildungsroman *and* criticises it at the same time. This dualistic treatment of a traditional form is indicative of the modernist impulse in *Portrait*, and the novel represents a challenge to the hegemony of the traditional English bildungsroman in the nineteenth century. The critique of bildung or self-cultivation in *Portrait* can seem quite subtle at first, since Joyce chose to locate his criticism within the boundaries of the traditional form. However, the narrative reveals that the author aims to separate his work from the established tradition of the bildungsroman. Within the English tradition of the nineteenth century, the concept of bildung had

become increasingly tied to pragmatic discourses of social recruitment and social mobility ... social responsibility tended to triumph over personal Bildung, thus creating an ambivalent, at times contradictory, relationship between socialization and individualism, between social mobility and self-sufficiency, between personal desire and social demand. (Castle, 30)

This is an accurate observation of the values and aims of the Victorian bildungsroman. I argue that in *Portrait*, these traditional generic traits are exactly what Joyce writes against, however *within* the traditional framework of the bildungsroman. Thus, I would further argue that he seeks to re-invent the genre not in terms of form, but rather in terms of content and ideals.

Traditionally, the bildungsroman had concerned itself with exterior social demands

and social mobility. The paramount goal for the protagonist in novels like *David Copperfield* is to achieve a higher social standing by becoming a Gentleman of self-sufficiency and prosperity, as well as getting married and being successfully integrated into society. The traditional bildungsroman hero at last always finds his/her place in the world, adapting to the rules and norms of the society he/she enters into. In *Portrait*, however, these concepts have to be approached differently, because Stephen has a rather complicated relationship with the society he is expected to adapt himself to. His struggle with the concepts of politics and religion is stressed by Joyce throughout the entire narrative, thus creating a tension between Stephen and the society he is expected to be a part of. In common with the traditional bildungsroman hero, his relationship to the society is never harmonious. Nonetheless, his early development is that of a traditional bildungsroman hero, as all the necessary elements of the genre are present: the young boy who evolves from childhood into maturity, experiences the harsh realities of life, and seemingly finds his true vocation in priesthood. The narrative could very well have ended here, thus constituting a conventional bildungsroman. However, Joyce instead has his protagonist develop further and consequently *away* from the church and towards art. He indicates to the reader that Stephen's initial vocation was the wrong one, and his disintegration from society thus starts as his new vocation cannot guarantee his success in life. If this dramatic move away from the traditional novel of development makes Joyce's critique of Ireland explicit, it also enhances the fact that Stephen cannot follow his true calling in Ireland. Leaving Ireland becomes a necessity for him to prosper and reach his potential as an artist. *Portrait* thus criticises both Irish society and the bildungsroman. Mitchell argues that "part of Joyce's literary genius was the ability to draw upon the literary past and deliver it to the future in an enriched form" (Mitchell, 74). Joyce took advantage of the narrative possibilities that the bildungsroman represented, and altered an already established genre that had been present in the English literary tradition for more than a century.

Here I find it relevant to comment on the structure of the novel, which serves the bildungsroman genre in important ways. The formal construction *Portrait* is one of the novel's most striking features. The five-part structure lies at the core of the novel's aesthetics. It creates a balance in the narrative, as well as an emphasis on each of the scenes in Stephen's life that has come to be most important in his development, both as a character and as an artist. The English author H. G. Wells described the book as "a mosaic of jagged fragments" (qtd. in Johnson, xvi). This is a quite accurate description, as the narrative never progresses in a straight line. The five parts, or chapters, are the most obvious and important of these fragments since each of them represents an important phase in the coming-of-age of the

protagonist. The emphases of each of the five chapters are also different. Each of them represents a new attitude or viewpoint of Stephen and each is related to the most important and ever-present aspects of his life: religion, politics, art, society, family and sexuality. The structure of the novel is thus important in the depiction of Stephen's growth. Joyce's emphasis on the most character-defining factors of his life makes the theme of the novel more accessible to the reader, and it is consequently easier to understand his rebellion later on. The five chapters also underline Stephen's development from a child to a young adult. The Stephen that we are introduced to in the first two chapters is, to a large degree, an immature adolescent, as opposed to the self-aware young man in the two last chapters of the book. At the beginning of the narrative, Stephen is young and inexperienced, struggling to fit in with his classmates and family as well as his burgeoning sexuality. He does not seem to know what way to choose in life although his artistic vocation surfaces quite early on in the narrative. The third chapter forms the mid-section of the novel, and represents a turning-point for Stephen: through Father Arnall's sermon, he becomes better acquainted with the torments of hell, and consequently repents for his sins. Re-awakened religiously, he is able to make important decisions concerning what he wants to do with his life. In the last two chapters, he has matured, found his true vocation, and is ready to embark on his artistic career. In my opinion, the structure of *Portrait* serves the bildungsroman genre. The novel is not held together by the story, as in a conventional novel, but by our interest in the development of the protagonist, or a work of art. Mitchell argues that

Since interest is focused on Stephen's spiritual progression, the novel tends to be episodic; it is clear that the basic division of the work into five chapters reflects this progression and that each chapter presents us with a distinct stage in Stephen's development. (Mitchell, 69)

Building on this good point, I would argue that because the road to maturity is not a balanced and smooth progression, the shifts in time and space between each of the five chapters are not only necessary, but also illustrative of the emotional ups and downs which are a part of any coming-of-age process. However, the structural rhythm of *Portrait* also pulls against the consistently rising action that is common in the traditional novel of development.

Individually, each of the five chapters mimics the structural pattern of the novel as a whole, as they all are possessed of their own rising action. Each chapter begins with Stephen in humility and ends with him triumphant, thus enhancing the contrast between his emotional ups and downs. For instance, the second chapter ends with Stephen in a blissful state in the arms of a prostitute: "In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of

himself" (85). This feeling of triumph is then undercut by a state of boredom and fatigue at the beginning of the third chapter, when he is back at Belvedere: "... he stared through the dull square of the window of the schoolroom, he felt his belly crave for its food" (86). Joyce thus presents an unsteady picture of the protagonist, and there is no single movement of rising action in the novel. Instead, the narrative holds five individual movements of rise and fall action that combined makes up the novel as a whole. This is a distinctly modernist aspect of the structure, as the "fragment" is one of the most important motifs in modernism. The fragmentary narrative in *Portrait* helps the reader focus on each important "moment in time" in Stephen's life. Also, by avoiding the traditional linear plots with clear resolutions in the end, Joyce enables himself to keep an ironic distance from his material in order to problematise his depiction of Stephen.

Although I have argued that it is possible to read *Portrait* entirely as a bildungsroman, I hasten to add that it is also necessary to recognize the aspects of künstlerroman in the novel, since the narrative is much concerned with Stephen's awakening as an artist. As the narrative progresses, I understand the bildungsroman to be gradually relieved by the künstlerroman. Turning my attention to the künstlerroman, I will now explore how it manifests itself in the narrative, particularly in the last two chapters of the novel.

2.1.2 The künstlerroman

Up to this point I have been discussing *Portrait* in context of the bildungsroman with a view to Stephen's spiritual development and coming-of-age as a young man. According to Robera Seret, a scholar on the modern künstlerroman, the word "portrait" in the title signifies that the narrative takes the form of a "description of the protagonist's sensation, and passions as well as his thoughts and ideas" (Seret, 92). It is important to remember that Stephen's coming-of-age occurs on two levels, as he grows into maturity not only as a young man, but also, and maybe more importantly, as an artist. The evolution of the narrative is thus paralleled with the evolution of Stephen's character, as it develops from the bildungsroman into the künstlerroman when he realizes that art, not religion, is his true vocation in life. While bildungsroman aspects dominate the first three chapters of the narrative, the künstlerroman acquires the main focus during the fourth chapter, and dominates the narrative toward the end. Stylistically, the künstlerroman does not differ much from the bildungsroman, and thus functions as a "sub-genre" to the latter. The important difference is that the protagonist of the künstlerroman is an artist-to-be, and the narrative traces his or her life from childhood into the stage of maturity that signals the "recognition of artistic destiny and mastery of an artistic

craft” (Abrams, 201). As I see it, the *künstlerroman* enabled modernist writers to apply the methods of realism to the subject of art. The theme of the *künstlerroman* is thus more integrated in the modernist project than that of the traditional *bildungsroman*.

Even though the *bildungsroman* style may be more obviously present in *Portrait*, elements of the *künstlerroman* are also traceable throughout the narrative. Each of the five chapters are doubly significant in not only representing an important stage of *bildung*, but also marking an important stage of Stephen’s artistic development. I would argue that the only part of the novel that is in lack of the *künstlerroman* aspect altogether is the third chapter, as it is entirely devoted to Stephen’s spiritual development. This is also pointed out by Seret. According to her, the artistic development is, like *bildung*, also an important and defining structural aspect of the novel:

The dominant pattern of Joyce’s *Künstlerroman* is gestation – gestation of the embryo, gestation of the artist’s soul, and gestation of the work of art ... Each chapter of *A Portrait* represents a stage in the gestation of the artist’s development. (Seret, 96)

We have already seen that the structure of the novel contributes to the *bildungsroman* aspects. Drawing on this quote by Seret, I argue that the structure similarly contributes to the *künstlerroman* aspects, since the two sub genres have many of their most important and determining formal characteristics in common. Further, Seret refers to the embryo as a symbol of Stephen’s artistic psyche. This is an accurate as well as an interesting observation, since Stephen’s artistic vocation has not yet come into being in the first chapter. However, the immature child is receptive of primitive sensory impressions that shape the way he sees the world. Especially words and the way they sound are intriguing to him. Already in the first chapter of the book, the foundation for the plausibility for Stephen to become an artist is established based on his constant preoccupation with language. Throughout the narrative, his artistic growth is intimately connected with his fascination with words and linguistics, which begins when he is a child, matures when he gets older, and remains until he realises that art is to be his fate. He is an artist-to-be whose medium will be language and he constantly ponders upon words and their meanings. For instance, when a classmate calls Simon Moonan “McGlade’s suck”, Stephen reckons that “Suck was a queer word” (8). He also contemplates the meaning of the word “belt”: “He kept his hands in the sidepockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt round his pocket. A belt was also to give a fellow a belt ... That was not a nice expression” (6-7). These two quotes are both from the first chapter and they both indicate the immaturity of Stephen as a young boy. As the narrative progresses and develops, so does the

vocabulary of Stephen, his apprehension of the world around him, as well as the narrative style itself. As a future writer and poet, he is also concerned with the images that different words and sounds are able to evoke: “The word was beautiful: wine. It made you think of dark purple because the grapes were dark purple that grew in Greece outside houses like white temples” (39). The artist in him comes to life, and he wants to use words and his imagination to create beautiful images that he is unable to find in the real world.

In my section on the bildungsroman I discussed Stephen’s increasing feelings of isolation, separation and disintegration from the world around him. The artist’s detachment and isolation from society is a central theme in the künstlerroman. The artist, who is in possession of an unusually acute perception, recognizes his/her own differences from the people around him and suffers from it. The painful isolation and disintegration he is experiencing, along with his poetic mind spurs on his creativity and urges to create works of art, and he begins to write verse:

The next day he sat at his table in the bare upper room for many hours. Before him lay a new pen, a new bottle of ink and a new emerald exercise ... On the first line of the page appeared the title of the verses he was trying to write ... He knew it was right to begin so for he had seen similar titles in the collected poems of Lord Byron. (58)

This quote reflects Stephen’s early attempt at being a writer. Soon, when he wins an essay contest, his talent is recognised. This brings relief to his mind, strengthening his belief that he really is possessed of artistic talent. However, his feeling of triumph is short-lived. Not only because his prize money was so quickly and easily spent, but because he is mocked by his classmates about Lord Byron being his favourite poet:

- And who do you think is the greatest poet? asked Boland, nudging his neighbour.
- Byron, of course, answered Stephen.
Heron gave the lead and all three joined in a scornful laugh.
- What are you laughing at? asked Stephen.
- You, said Heron. Byron the greatest poet! He’s only a poet for uneducated people. (68)

His detachment from the other schoolboys is perpetuated. The recognition and acclaim he received upon winning the prize represented an acknowledgement to his artistic talent. However, it did not alter his state of alienation from his surroundings. Stephen’s fixed state of isolation and disintegration is one of the major themes of the novel. It is also a recurring theme of the archetypal künstlerroman as it traces the fate of the artist, the problems he/she encounters, and his/her relationship to the society. Joyce’s concept of the artist was that of an

isolated and lonely individual who recognised his/her own differences as he/she was “othered” from the society. In Joyce’s own words, “isolation is the first principle of artistic economy” (*Stephen Hero*, 33). Joyce indicates that there is a need for the artist to experience a certain degree of disintegration to fully understand the concept of artistic creativity, and to create works of art.

In the course of the second chapter, Stephen enters adolescence and experiences feelings that cannot be satisfied by his artistic creation. He suddenly has a need to rid himself of his isolation and be with others, as his sexual desires intensify. Seret argues that “passion and poetry is fused in the soul of the adolescent artist as literature becomes linked to sex” (Seret, 110). Although this point is too general to be wholly persuasive, it would certainly seem valid if linked to *Portrait*. He cannot express his emotions in words before he has surrendered to his feelings: “He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin” (83). Only after he has had his experience with the prostitute is he able to express his intense feelings with words. The experience comes first, then the possibility to recreate his passionate feelings verbally. Seret further argues that “Women and poetry are symbiotic to Stephen” (Seret, 111). He has always been able to gain inspiration from the women he has acquainted in the course of his young life, from Eileen Vance, whom he wanted to marry when he was young, to Emma Clery³. To Mercedes, a character from *The Count of Monte Cristo* which he reads as a young boy, to the Virgin Mary, to whom he prays during Father Arnall’s sermon on hell in the third chapter, to the prostitute with whom he has his first sexual experience. However, the most important of Stephen’s female encounters in *Portrait* occurs at the end of the fourth chapter, by the seashore. At this point, Stephen is no longer the naïve little boy who finds pleasure in discovering new words and their meanings. Now, as he has cast priesthood aside, he is an explorer of life, always wandering around discovering new aspect of the world. As he is admiring the beach, he suddenly realizes that he is not alone. A young girl enters the scene, wading in the shallow water. To Stephen, the girl is extraordinarily beautiful, “one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird” (144). The scene is pure and simple, and the two young people part without having exchanged a single word. They only share a glance before Stephen sets off across the beach in an ecstatic state. Although brief, the encounter has an enormous impact on him, and assumes the form of an epiphany, a moment of pure aesthetic apprehension:

3 Originally a character from *Stephen Hero*, but is referred to in *A Portrait* simply by the characters E.C.

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! (145)

Joyce also used the epiphany as an artistic device in his short stories from the collection *Dubliners*, published in 1914. It is an effective method for the author to convey to the reader that the protagonist has experienced a significant and momentous sensation that makes him realize a larger essence or meaning of his life and fate. Originally, the epiphany was associated with a “manifestation” of God’s presence within the created world. Joyce, however, adapted the term to secular experience, and in his writings the term signifies the experience of sudden revelation that occurs in the act of perceiving a commonplace and ordinary object. In Stephen’s case there is a transposition from sight to insight, as the vision of the girl symbolises his final determination to embrace his artistic vocation. The grace and beauty of the “bird girl” represents a higher form of being; she is to Stephen a “wild angel” (145), as well as a woman and a muse. The gloriousness of Stephen’s vision of the girl at the seashore represents a climactic event in the novel, and stands in sharp contrast to his female encounter of the second chapter. While the prostitute is nothing more than a means for Stephen to be relieved of his desire, the girl in the epiphany signifies to him a larger-than-life persona. The latter stirs deeper emotions in Stephen and functions as a catalyst for his artistic vocation and he is ready to write. The vision upon the seashore is indubitably where the *künstlerroman* reaches its climax in the novel. With this epiphanic high-point, Joyce prepares his character for a life dedicated to art and artistic creation.

The fifth, and last, chapter represents the culmination of all of Stephen’s artistic ponderings in the previous chapters. Having recognized the true shape of his identity, Stephen is now a university student and an aspiring artist. His intellectual growth is reflected in the academic literary discussions he partakes in, as well as in his artistic creations like the villanelle and diary entries. Art gives his life an order and a sense of coherence and purpose apparently unavailable elsewhere. In other words, art and aestheticism comes naturally to Stephen and provides his life with meaning and purpose. Art has become one of the most determining and important factors of his life, as it

enables Stephen to draw back from the glimmering and chaotic surface of experience into an ordered and self-conscious inner world. Joyce captures here the essence of Stephen’s verbal self-enclosure: those words do not simply

describe a world; language slowly *becomes* a world with its own character and integrity. (Spinks, 88)

As art wins through, the last chapters represent a counterweight to the preceding chapters, as Stephen is more self-aware and mature than before. His youthful fascination with words from the first two chapters has turned into a life-determining vocation, “for he felt that the spirit of beauty had folded him round like a mantle and that in revery at least he had been acquainted with nobility” (148). He is in ecstasy over his new determination to follow his artistic calling. However, before he can fully assume his position as an artist, there is one more task for Stephen to fulfill. Seret argues that “Before an individual can develop into an artist he must first formulate a concept of aesthetics” (Seret, 113), and this is what Stephen tries to establish in his conversation with his friend Cranly. He draws on the aesthetic theories of Aquinas and Aristotle and mixes them with his own thoughts on art and literature. He also presents the reader with his own view on what he perceives the artist to be:

The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails. (181)

This is an important characteristic of the *künstlerroman*. The artist-to-be has to define himself as an artist, and what the art he is striving to attain should be like. This is closely linked with his self-awareness as an artist. In formulating his own aesthetic theory and ideas about what art should be like, he is able to explore his own artistic psyche. Stephen’s artistic theory can also be read as a testimony to Joyce himself, as he brilliantly demonstrates his knowledge and understanding of the classical theorists on the subject. I would argue that, with *Portrait*, Joyce formulates his own aesthetic theory based on previous theories and his relating them to his own artistic creation. For Stephen, the direct result of his aesthetic ponderings and ideas is an artistic creation in the form of a villanelle in which he presents his concept of beauty. For Joyce himself, I would argue that *Portrait* serves the same purpose, as I take all of his aesthetic and artistic theories to be incorporated within a single work of literature. Stephen becomes the medium for Joyce’s ideas on beauty and artistic creation.

However, Stephen’s aestheticism is conflicted with the nationalism of his friend, Davin. Stephen’s conviction that artistic creation is synonymous with singular freedom, in addition to his disdain for Irish society, culture, and religion makes Davin question: “Are you Irish at all?” (169). Stephen states that his family tree proves that he is, and Davin urges him to “try to be one of us” (170), since he believes that a man’s country must come first. Stephen, however, refuses to be bound by nationalism and the debt of his forefathers. He is convinced

that to produce great art, he has to be emancipated from the restriction of the nationalist cultural politics of Ireland. The artist must fly freely and his standpoint in the discussion with Davin foreshadows his final decision to leave Ireland behind. He tells Davin that “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (171), thus expressing his determination not to be caught up in the restrictive features of Irish society. He further states that “Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow” (171). In this quote, he is referring to how the Irish and the Catholic Church turned their backs on Parnell, their biggest champion of home rule. He also refers to the bleakness of his own future as an artist if he remains in Ireland and attempts to become a writer. Thus, as readers, we are to believe that the church and Irish society represent a danger to a life of artistic and creative freedom. Consequently, Stephen’s discussion with Davin turns into a harsh critique of Ireland and Irish values. It is not a place for artists, and it is impossible for Stephen to be integrated with the society and still follow his artistic vocation. The entire fifth chapter is, in fact, devoted to Stephen’s determination to leave Ireland, since he has discovered his true destiny and formed his own aesthetic theory. This theory finds its expression in Stephen’s villanelle and his diary entries at the end of the narrative. After the presentation of the villanelle an important image occurs, symbolising his restless soul:

What birds were they? ... They flew round and round the jutting shoulder of a house in Molesworth Street. The air of the late March evening made clear their flight, their dark darting quivering bodies flying clearly against the sky as against a limphung cloth of smoky tenuous blue. (188)

The birds are flying towards the unknown, symbolising the journey Stephen is about to embark on. He will also fly into the unknown, away from his fatherland, religion, parents and friends to be able to fully commit his life to the sphere of art. Stephen’s choice does not guarantee his success in life, but nevertheless, it is the right choice for him. In the final pages of the narrative Stephen moves swiftly towards self imposed exile in his search for an artistic utopia, which is a total sacrifice for the sake of art. This is the ideal ending for a *künstlerroman* and a further step away from the *bildungsroman*. Mitchell argues that the fact Joyce has Stephen’s vocation move away from the Church toward art does not represent a break with the *bildungsroman* in itself. Rather, it is “the notion of the necessity of escape from society, or self-imposed exile as a prerequisite to a fulfilling life, which gives a new twist to this form of the novel” (Mitchell, 73). Dissenting from this view, I argue that Stephen’s choice is linked to, and entails a significant generic shift. In the *bildungsroman* tradition, the author

does not only portray the process of development of a young man into maturity, he also implies throughout the narrative that this development is a normative one. In *Portrait*, Stephen's development is arguably not the most sensible one in terms of becoming a so-called upstanding member of society. In terms of his own personal spiritual and creative fulfillment, on the other hand, it is definitely the right decision. While the bildungsroman opts for the individual's rightful place within the greater context of society, the künstlerroman's first and foremost concern is the welfare of the individual him/herself. In the end, Stephen makes the right choices for himself. He tells his friend, Cranly, that he

will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning. (208)

The künstlerroman has taken over for the traditional bildungsroman, and emancipates the protagonist from the tradition of integration into society.

The importance of bildung as a constituent element of development lies at the very core of the narrative in *Portrait*. It has been argued that the “Evolution of the artistic soul is represented as a three-way struggle toward fulfillment of sexual, religious, and aesthetic desires” (Connolly, 4). The fact that the concept of bildung is present within the künstlerroman genre contributes to the portrayal of Stephen as a dynamic and complex character, as he develops both as a young man and as an artist. The fact that the aspect of bildung is so strikingly present sheds light on Stephen's status as an “unfinished” artist. Part of Joyce's fame as an author comes from his extreme thoroughness, always constructing his novels very carefully with an eye to every detail. It is hardly coincidental that he did not portray Stephen as a mature artist towards the end of the novel. Joyce always made sure that every aspect of the structure and theme served a specific purpose in the narrative. In my opinion, it is clear that Joyce did not intend to present Stephen as a mature and fully developed artist. His concern in *Portrait* was to portray Stephen's *process* of becoming an artist, and not his life as a finished artist. Seret refers to this process as a “voyage” that occurs on two levels – the spiritual level and the geographical level. At the spiritual level, Stephen's voyage is characterized by a movement away from the materialistic world toward a more abstract world, as his fascination with words and aesthetics increases throughout the narrative. His goal is to fully express the contents of his soul with words, rise above the crowd and create beautiful works of art. To embark on his spiritual voyage, Stephen has to make a geographical voyage as well. Towards the end of *Portrait*, he arrives at his final decision to

leave his native country behind to finally begin his artistic career. Thus, the last chapter of the book can be seen as the “conclusion” of the narrative – the point to which the other four chapters have taken us as readers. It is also a crucial and defining chapter in terms of *Portrait* being a *künstlerroman*. The narrative focuses on Stephen’s process of growing into maturity as well as becoming an artist. It is also a process of the *bildungsroman* developing into the *künstlerroman*. If Stephen had finished his coming-of-age process in the traditional form of the *bildungsroman*, he would have successfully learned a trade and found his rightful place in the society into which he was born. In Joyce’s narrative, however, Stephen is still *on the way* of establishing himself as an artist, and he has come to the conclusion that he cannot fulfill his artistic destiny in Ireland. His voyage needs to continue, both spiritually, artistically, and geographically. The coming-of-age process of the *bildungsroman* has thus culminated in the voyage of creativity and the formation of the artist. In the last chapter, Joyce avoids having Stephen share the fate of David Copperfield, and become a Gentleman. Rather, he will become an artist.

We have seen that in *Portrait*, the *bildungsroman* and the *künstlerroman* has come together in a hybrid sub genre to the novel. However, there is an important aspect of the *künstlerroman* that also links the novel to the autobiography. This occurs because the *künstlerroman* is generally more self-analytical than the *bildungsroman*. Seret claims that to write a novel in this particular form, authors will have to “delve into their souls by revisiting memories of their childhood” (Seret, 91). Further, she states that

the inexperienced author must pass through a process of introspection and self-analysis while he is also formulating ideas for his *Künstlerroman*. Before he can attempt to trace the development of a protagonist’s artistic career, he must first understand himself. The act of writing his *Künstlerroman* forces the young artist to voyage into the mysterious and unexplored regions of his unconscious in order to define his own self. (Seret, 91)

I agree with this observation. In *Portrait*, Joyce is taking a retrospective look at his own youth as well as his artistic coming-of-age. He is, in a way, “time-travelling” back to a point in his life when he was struggling with similar issues to those of Stephen. Naturally, as an artist is writing about the formative process of an artist, the *künstlerroman* is likely to be closely linked to the artistic formation of the author. Becoming subjectively involved is almost unavoidable, for his closest frame of reference is himself. Joyce did not possess any considerable amount of artistic distance to his material in writing *Portrait*, and this is most probably the main reason why critics have always speculated whether the novel is autobiographical. Joyce might have written his first novel as a testimony to his own artistic

development, as he in the last chapter underscores the need of the developing artist to free himself from the repressive milieu of his past in order to fully emerge as an artist. Thus, he conveys his own experiences and his own ideas of the artist, and not a general notion that all aspiring artists possess. Consequently, he weaves the events in *Portrait* even closer to his own life and experiences. Now, as we have seen that the *künstlerroman* to a certain degree is linked to autobiographical data, I find it relevant to move the discussion into the sphere of realism. I am going to explore the aspects of the novel that to various degrees make truth claims, and are associated with aspects of Joyce's own life as an aspiring artist growing up in Ireland.

2.2 The pseudo-autobiography

Before commencing my discussion of how Joyce treats the genre of autobiography in *Portrait*, I find it necessary to comment on the historical background of the novel as well as returning for a moment to the responses and comments made by its earliest critics. Joyce's first attempt to weave the threads of his own life into fiction was called *Stephen Hero* - an autobiographical novel in which he favoured realism. However, it was a manuscript he grew tired of already in 1904, despite his brother Stanislaus's opinion of it at the time: "the chapters are exceptionally well written in a style which seems to be altogether original" (qtd. in Johnson, xii). Nevertheless, a greater part of the unfinished manuscript was lost. Joyce's frustration with this project seems to have been rooted in the fact that he experienced problems adapting himself to the rigid rules and conventions of the traditional Victorian biography. His personal involvement in *Stephen Hero* made it difficult for him to be objective, modernist, and artistic. He was too close to his material, which may explain why he was unable to provide the narrative with artistic shape. Thus, in terms of artistry, the novel was found wanting. While Joyce aimed for *Stephen Hero* to be objective, documentary, and autobiographical, *Portrait* is a work of much greater artistic significance while still maintaining a sense of realism in the narrative. Virginia Woolf, having read the novel upon its publication in 1916, saw it as a work which "attempts to come closer to life" (Staley, 4), and H. G. Wells made a similar remark: "[the] interest of the book depends upon its quintessential and unfailing reality" (Staley, 4). These two comments made by two of Joyce's contemporary authors indicate a fascination with Joyce's abilities as a realist. Along with this significant aspect of realism, the novel also contained a considerable amount of deliberate, yet subtle artistry. This artistry, however, did not stir the same enthusiasm in the critics as did the

aspects of realism. The critic Edward Garnett, whom I have referred to earlier, commented that *Portrait* was “too discursive, formless, unrestrained” (Staley, 4), and the author and painter, Wyndham Lewis, noted that the novel possessed “far too tenuous an elegance for my taste” (Staley, 4). Nevertheless, most contemporary critics were in favour of Joyce’s novel. Although the novel was artistic to such a degree, for most readers, the realism had a tendency to overshadow the artistry. Consequently, because Joyce’s aesthetics were subtle and intricate, early readers tended to see the novel solely as an autobiography, or at least a thinly disguised one. It was then left up to the scholars to “dissect” it, thus revealing the complex relationship between art and life that Joyce so carefully constructed. Joyce’s initial text, *Stephen Hero*, can be considered a part of his development as a writer and an artist of the written word: it was the first text in which Joyce combined modulations of narrative perspective with aspects of inner consciousness. However, large portions of *Stephen Hero* found its way into *Portrait*, although with great alterations. Knowing that his early attempts at the genre of autobiography had only been a source of frustration to him, it becomes quite obvious that he did not intend *Portrait* to be completely autobiographical. Rather, he would draw on events from his own life to create a work of art and have Stephen Dedalus live a life similar to Joyce’s own. As he told his brother, he meant the novel to be “almost autobiographical” (*The Complete Dublin Diary*, 12). He rejected realism as his main focus in favour of a more effective account of the development of the artist-psyche. As mentioned earlier, *Portrait* is today considered to be one of Joyce’s more accessible works, and is now perceived to be more of a conventional novel than it was upon the time of its first publication.

The indubitable autobiographical content weaved into a novelistic narrative must have generated certain confusion amongst the novel’s first critics, since they wrote their reviews based on the literary forms they were familiar with. An autobiographical novel was certainly not a common style of fiction, which was probably the reason why so many critics saw it entirely as an autobiography. A striking feature of the narrative of *Portrait*, however, is that it does not contain any genre specific traits characteristic of the autobiography, except the fact that many of the events are taken from Joyce’s own life. Rather, the reader is aware of its clear autobiographical traits based on his or her knowledge of the author’s character and life. For Joyce, *Stephen Hero* proved to be a necessary first attempt at autobiographical writing. As he was unable to tell the story the way he wanted in the form of the traditional autobiography, he had to alter the genre, and the ten-year gap he mentions at the very end of *Portrait*, “*Dublin 1904 Trieste 1914*” (213) represents the time he needed to develop his initial idea into an extraordinary stylistic transformation of *Stephen Hero*. It is also interesting to note that

ten years after his initial attempt at writing an autobiographical novel, Joyce was able to write from an entirely new perspective. He had gained a necessary distance from his own experiences, and this kind of temporal and attitudinal distance enabled him to look back with increased maturity at his youthful struggles to become an artist. This brings authority to the narrative, as Joyce himself has gone through the formation of the life he wants to depict in *Portrait*. We have already seen that Joyce made a significant move away from the traditional realism of the Victorian novel, crafting his novel into a *künstlerroman* with strong aspects of *bildung*. I am now going to discuss the autobiographical aspect of the novel and how it manifests itself as a part of the aesthetic framework of *Portrait*, thus transforming it into a strikingly modernist pseudo-autobiography.

2.2.1 (Self-)portraiture: Stephen and James

It is a well known fact that any novel written by any novelist about a protagonist who wants to become a writer will provoke a suspicion amongst readers and critics that the events of the novel are derived from the author's own life. And of course, *Portrait* is no exception since its grand theme is, in fact, provided by Joyce's own experiences as a young man and artist-to-be. Fictitious writings that aim to be realistic often tend to lean towards the autobiographical and consequently the author's own experiences. Harry Levin, a scholar on modernism, puts it like this:

The increasing demands for social and psychological detail that are made upon the novelist can only be satisfied out of his own experience. The forces which make him an outsider focus his observation upon himself. He becomes his own hero, and begins to crowd his other characters into the background. (Levin, 9)

Furthermore, some critics have seen the book as a

thinly veiled autobiographical record of an arrogant, somewhat ridiculous, even 'insufferable' ... young man with artistic pretensions who is not understood by his family nor appreciated by his society, and who turns his back on 'all that' and decides to remake the world neared to his heart's desire. (Redford, 102)

These observations do not do justice to the book, its protagonist and subject matter. Indeed it is a portrait not only of Joyce's alter-ego, Stephen, but also of Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century. Running through the narrative are accounts of the author's personality as a rebellious artist-to-be committed to the spiritual freedom of body and mind, his religious notions, home, and family. The aspects of his personal life are also woven into historical and social contexts: the British dominance of Ireland, the protestant dominance over Catholics, and the dominance of the Catholic Church that the Irish Catholics imposed on themselves. In

Joyce's opinion, art could be created out of this intricate entanglement of his personal life with the social, political and religious climate in Ireland at the time. He also tied his own life closer to the narrative in *Portrait* by naming the protagonist Stephen Dedalus. By doing this, he has art imitate life, as he published his first three short stories under the pseudonym "Stephen Daedalus". In the early days of Joyce's writing process, when he was still working on *Stephen Hero*, Stanislaus Joyce wrote in his diary:

Jim is beginning his novel, as he usually begins things, half in anger, to show that in writing about himself he has a subject of more interest than their⁴ aimless discussion ... Jim told me his idea for the novel. It is to be almost autobiographical, and naturally as it comes from Jim, satirical. He is putting a large number of his acquaintances into it, and those Jesuits whom he has known. (*The Complete Dublin Diary*, 12)

Stanislaus here indicates that Joyce drew on his own experiences when writing the novel, however satirical and playful he wanted it to be. He did not intend the narrative to be completely autobiographical, and he manipulated the truth where he needed to make it fit better with the theme of the narrative. I would argue that he exercised a principle of *selection* when crafting the novel and this narrative strategy is partly what sets it apart from the traditional autobiography. He does not merely transcribe the events of his life as they happened in chronological order, and he takes an enormous step away from the completely "realistic" Victorian autobiography, as he is never faithful to every detail and experience of his actual lived life. As Jeri Johnson states in the introduction to the novel:

The events presented are not scrupulously faithful to every detail of Stephen's lived experience. They are selected by Joyce, who with remarkable spareness and precision provides the telling detail. Things happen in the novel because of their significance to the portrait of Stephen that Joyce wishes to draw, because they reveal something about him (and the culture in which he exists). (Johnson, xvi)

As Johnson correctly observes, Joyce does not feel obligated to render every single detail of his lived life with his readers. Instead, his principle of selection helps him tell exactly the story that he wants to tell us, while at the same time reserving the right to make use of his artistic freedom as a writer and an artistic craftsman. In writing *Stephen Hero* he became the victim to the restrictive genre of the strictly realistic Victorian autobiography. *Portrait*, on the other hand, made him loosen up this old, rigid style of life writing, and instead exercise fully his artistic capacity. The original sixty-three chapters of *Stephen Hero* are in *Portrait* reduced

4 The editors of *Dana* - a literary journal that was looking for submissions.

to five, and those five are carefully crafted and well balanced entities that each plays a significant part in Stephen's life and in the development of the narrative. Of course, emphasis is also placed on chronology, which provides the narrative with mobility and helps it move forward. However, each part has its own mobility, its own opening and ending. The novel's overall pattern emerges when we examine the parts individually and see how closely they relate to, and inform each other. The five parts are also intimately linked to each other, and one could not exist without the others as they are all crucial to the development of Stephen's story. No excess information or events are included in the narrative. Joyce crafted his story with elements from his own life in a five part structure infused with aspects of the *bildungs-* and the *künstlerroman*. Modernist aesthetics is thus given greater prominence than realism in the narrative. Joyce has managed to select a structure and develop a narrative that supports all the genres he has chosen to include. In addition, the structure, aesthetics and distancing strategies of the novel support the notion that it is a work of fiction. However, there can be no doubt that there are aspects of realism included in the narrative that make it difficult for the reader to determine where Stephen ends and James begins, and indeed to ascertain whether such a shift occurs in the narrative at all. As we have seen, the quote from Stanislaus's diary clearly indicates that his brother had started writing a *novel*, albeit one with autobiographical traits. One would presume that this statement would effectively put an end to all speculations of *Portrait* (as well as the initial *Stephen Hero*) being a pure autobiography. Why, then, have many readers of the novel been tempted to apply the character of Stephen to James Joyce himself?

In his essay «*Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist*», John Paul Riquelme states that "Since Joyce is writing fiction and not pure autobiography, it is important not to identify the real author in any absolute way with the young artistic character; nevertheless, the texts frequently encourage us to consider the alignment" (Riquelme, 108). The autobiographical elements of *Portrait* complicate the reader's response to Stephen as a fictional character. There are no clear differences between Stephen and Joyce himself that separate the two from each other. Rather, the reader's attention is drawn almost exclusively to the aspects that unite them. To create a realistic "portrait" of Stephen, Joyce had to look back at his own past to find a suitable "model" for his milieu. As he was going to portray a young man growing up in Ireland at about the same time he himself grew up there, he had to locate his protagonist within real space. Stephen walks the same streets of Bray and Dublin that Joyce himself did, he also attends real schools and churches, and visits pubs that Joyce himself went to. There is a certain insistence on fact running through *Portrait*, although it is a work of fiction. The

historical background for the narrative also supports the aspect of realism in the novel. The social and political climate in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century is an important theme on several different occasions throughout Stephen's life as an adolescent, starting with the Christmas dinner scene in the first chapter. Important threads in every chapter include the history of British dominance over Ireland, as well as the dominance of Irish Catholics by British Protestants. Running through the narrative is also the young Stephen's refusal to submit to either authority, especially when it comes to matters of art. These are all themes that are derived directly from Joyce's own life, and are confirmed by Roger Norburn's *A James Joyce Chronology*:

1891 ... (Christmas) After a religious and political row at dinner ... Mrs. Conway⁵ leaves the house for good a few days later ... **1893** (Summer) Visits Cork with JSJ⁶ who begins the process of selling off what is left of his mortgaged properties there ... **1897** After the summer examinations wins an exhibition of £30 for two years and a prize of £3 for the best essay in the Middle Grade. (Norburn, 4-5)

These three events from Joyce's real life are all present in *Portrait*. Also, maybe the most important event in the novel, Stephen's final determination to leave Ireland, is an event derived from Joyce's life. The norms and conventions of Irish society made it impossible for either of them to stay, and by having Stephen experience the same restraint he himself had felt during his formative years in Ireland, Joyce manages to incorporate his own perspectives as a young artist into the narrative. The world of fact thus influences the world of fiction, and he manages to create a certain balance between reality and the imagination, and between James Joyce and Stephen Dedalus. The incorporation of factual elements such as these into the narrative also adds to the realistic background for the story. However, Joyce consistently re-shaped some of the realistic events, gave his characters fictional names, and added a number of fictional events to the narrative. In order to create exactly the story he wanted, he made a deliberate move away from realism towards fiction. I argue that although the elements of realism and autobiography are both striking and numerous, the fictional elements that are present in the narrative negate the possibility of it being an autobiography. Seret plausibly claims that *Portrait* is a "novel that blends fact with fiction to present the development of the artist from early childhood to maturity – that is, a *Künstlerroman*» (Seret, 106). In other words, Seret re-connects the narrative with the novel genre as she believes Joyce's book to be first and foremost a *künstlerroman*. As we have seen, this sub genre to the novel can be rather

5 Renamed Dante Riordan in *Portrait*.

6 John Stanislaus Joyce, father of James Joyce.

vague and undistinguishable as a unitary genre because it is more or less dependent on aspects of realism and autobiography. Thus, in one sense the *künstlerroman* is in itself a pseudo-autobiography.

2.2.2 The role of the narrator in fictional autobiography

Already in the Victorian period the life narrative and the fictional (auto)biography were common literary genres. Authors like Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë wrote life narratives in the form of fictional biographies that followed the protagonist's life from a to z, and the entire story was written from a retrospective point of view through the eyes of a third-person omniscient narrator. Joyce, on the other hand, deliberately avoided this traditional pattern to create a radically new "portrait of the artist" in the opening passage. To illustrate this, I am going to compare the opening passage of *Portrait* to one of Dickens, as he is one of the chief representatives of life writing in the Victorian period. His biographical novel, *David Copperfield*, published in 1850, also concerns a young man's coming of age. The title of the novel's first chapter is "I am born", and it opens with these words:

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero' of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. (Dickens, 11)

The opening passage clearly indicates that this is not the voice of a child telling his own story. Rather, the words and the grammatical complexity of the passage reveal that it is the voice of an elderly man looking back at his childhood. He is telling his life story in retrospect, which was common in the traditional Victorian autobiography. Conversely, Joyce's opening passage, immediately announces the nature of his untraditional writing style, in addition to his innovative break with realist novels such as *David Copperfield*. The childish language, baby talk and grammatical errors in the opening passage of *Portrait* effectively connects the reader with Stephen's childish consciousness at this early stage of his life – his childhood is mirrored in the language of the narrative. Stephen is the "baby tuckoo", and the point of view is that of a perceptive, but naïve child. The language is thus not that of an invisible, omniscient third-person narrator, but of Stephen himself. The free indirect discourse used in a third-person narrative provides it with a personal feel as Stephen's thoughts, speech, and *idiolect*⁷ is appropriated to the text. However, the language of the novel is not stylistically consistent.

⁷ A variety of language unique to an individual.

Joyce uses free indirect discourse, which is a way of representing a character's speech or thought by combining direct discourse with narrative comments, only when the narrator moves into Stephens's inner life and thoughts. Thus the free indirect discourse becomes a character-marker for Stephen, as it is this stylistic device that makes the protagonist's character shine through. Katherine Mullin argues that this opening passage exemplifies one of Joyce's most significant formal innovations: "There is no omniscient narrator here, who directs the reader's response. Instead the narrative focuses on a particular consciousness, and is articulated through the kind of language that such a consciousness would use" (Mullin, 102). The effect of this rejection of omniscient narration is a new focus on a single consciousness. The reader is immediately able to establish a close relationship to Stephen's character and inner life, thus getting to know him more intimately than in most autobiographies or works of biographical fiction. Already on the third page of the first chapter, Stephen's attitude towards his mother is clearly expressed through *his* perspective, although with a third-person narrator:

His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college. Nice mother! The first day in the hall of the castle when she had said goodbye she had put up her veil double to her nose to kiss him: and her nose and eyes were red. But he had pretended not to see that she was going to cry. She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried. (7)

In this passage, Stephen's childish psyche is being revealed by the means of free indirect discourse. As readers we get the impression that Stephen tells his own story as he goes along, and his story comes into existence as we read the novel. The reader gets to partake in his coming of age instead of just being presented with the retrospective point of view. The narrator of *David Copperfield*, on the other hand, establishes an impenetrable distance between himself and the reader. This is a typical feature of traditional autobiographies which present the events broadly in chronological order without necessarily including representations of the protagonist's inner consciousness.

The passage from *Portrait* quoted above also exemplifies the immature "baby talk" of Stephen in the first chapter of the novel. As the narrative develops, the childish language gradually fades away as Stephen grows into adolescence and develops a more mature speech. Thus, the language of the protagonist is one of Joyce's most important aesthetic devices in the novel because it provides the narrative with a certain spontaneity and genuineness. Furthermore, it allows him to liberate his fiction from an overbearing and possibly inauthentic authorial presence. This aesthetic move also sets the novel radically apart from the traditional autobiography which presupposes a close connection between the author and his work.

According to Hobbs, autobiographical writing is a kind of writing that “focuses on the experiences and standpoint of the writer, often using ‘I’ to convey to readers what it is like to think, see, and feel life inside his or her skin” (Hobbs, 3). In *Portrait*, the author assumes an entirely new role – he is not intimately connected with his work, as the autobiographical “I” is eliminated. There is no wholly independent third-person narrator either. Rather, Joyce has selected a third-person narrator who is located somewhere between Stephen himself and the third-person narrator. This “doubled” narrative perspective makes a seemingly impersonal third-person narrator become personal, and the reader is allowed to see the world through Stephen’s eyes as he experiences different things for the first time. His world revolves around an externally imposed world, or milieu, at the Clongowes and Belvedere schools, and at home with his family. In addition, his world also revolves around a great variety of sensuous impressions. As Lee Spinks puts it,

Each of the five senses is powerfully evoked: sight (the child watching his father watch him); sound (the bedtime story and the song’s refrain); touch (the warm and cold bed); smell (his mother and the oilsheet); and taste (lemon platt). (Spinks, 80)

This is one of the most important aspects of Joyce’s “modernist language”, as the impersonal third-person narrative is moulded into Stephen’s personal perspective on his surroundings and the people in his life. This narrative style also disrupts the “one-thing-after-another” narrative of the traditional autobiography. Instead of simply creating an account of a variety of events in a person’s life, presented in chronological order, Joyce aims to give a representation of Stephen’s entire *character* in the narrative. The entire narrative is tied to Stephen’s character alone, his perception of people and things surrounding him. In other words, what we read is what he sees, thinks, or feels. Joyce’s modernist language in *Portrait* represents a revolutionary innovation, since it allows him to construct Stephen’s entire character, his internal as well as external life, based on affective as well as perceptive origins.

The narrative stays in the third person almost throughout. It is not until the end of part V, in the very last pages of the novel that the narrative shifts to the first person. This occurs when the narrative suddenly takes the form of Stephen’s journal entries as he prepares to leave Ireland to follow his artistic vocation. For the first time in the narrative, we are allowed to hear Stephen’s own voice unconcealed. The diary notes are fragmentary and personal, and written in a poetic style that is indicative of Stephen’s capability as a writer. When his departure is approaching, he writes:

Away! Away! The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against

the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone. Come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me, their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the winds of their exultant and terrible youth. (213)

These last pages of the narrative make up an untraditional ending to a novel structure. Joyce has, by means of the journal entries, managed to include another genre that claims realism into the narrative. He creates a final illusion that Stephen is a real character, and that the novel is a real autobiography. He also establishes an even closer relationship between the protagonist and the reader while at the same time shaking the stability of the text. The narrative thus ends on a note of uncertainty, for is it a novel or is it an autobiography? Joyce does not provide us with a final answer.

2.3. Joyce's "biografiction"

While working on *Ulysses*, Joyce told his artist friend, Frank Budgen, that although he had worked on the novel all day, he had written only two sentences. He said: "I have the words already ... What I am seeking is the perfect order of the words in the sentence. There is an order in every way appropriate" (qtd. in Redford, 102). This statement characterises Joyce's writing method. He put a lot of work into the aesthetics of his writings, the most appropriate language and style, always searching for the perfect order of his vision. He most definitely used the same method while working on his first novel. He applied his new "economic policy" to his work as he successfully transformed the estimated 150,000 words of *Stephen Hero* into the less than 90,000 words of *Portrait*. Joyce had greatly reduced the number of scenes, events, and explanations of Stephen's motivations, and replaced them by quick and brief character sketching, a series of related events in chronological order of varying lengths and with various time gaps between them, as well as numerous minor characters, all with one purpose and focus: that of Stephen himself. Joyce sought to communicate only the necessary parts of the events of Stephen's life to the reader, and instead of including extensive descriptions of his milieu, family, inner thoughts etc. into the narrative, he offered symbols as a structural device of the novel. Joyce carefully thought through the choices he had concerning the aesthetics of his novel and what his finished novel would be like – a combination of the intelligible and the sensible, of truth and artistry. There would be traces of artistic craft on every page of the narrative, each representing a certain aspect of bildung at different points in Stephen's life. The structure itself, which I have addressed in my discussion of the bildungsroman, is thus an important feature of the narrative. The structure

both presents and reflects Stephen's coming-of-age, both as a young man and as an artist. For the novel as a genre, the narrative structure is an important feature also because it arranges the events in the appropriate order and provides a certain mobility or progression to the story that is being told in the narrative.

For both readers and critics, Joyce's life has always been intimately tied with his fiction. However, although we have seen that it is beyond doubt that *Portrait* contains autobiographical traits, he did not craft his novel on the basis of realism alone. Rather, I would argue that what he offers his readers is a stylised view on the everyday world of the Ireland of his childhood and adolescence. The elements of autobiography are no doubt a part of Joyce's artistry, but he did not keep them on a personal level. Rather, they are reshaped into something more objective and de-personalised. This supports the idea of *Portrait* being a fictional work of art rather than a realistic rendering of Joyce's real-life coming-of-age. Stanislaus, probably Joyce's most discerning critic, made a comment about the novel after it was finished:

my brother was not the weak, shrinking infant who figures in *A Portrait of the Artist*. He has drawn, it is true, very largely upon his own life and his own experience ... But *A Portrait of the Artist* is not an autobiography; it is an artistic creation. As I had something to say to its reshaping, I can affirm this without hesitation. (*My Brother's Keeper*, 39)

Here, Stanislaus makes a clear distinction between his brother and the persona of Stephen Dedalus. He also underlines the novel's status as a work of fiction that is, at most, inspired by real-life characters and events. The fact that these statements are made by someone as close to Joyce as his own brother, emphasises *Portrait's* status as a work of fiction. Thus, we can draw the conclusion that the novel is definitely the dominant genre in *Portrait*, which parodies and manipulates the conventional autobiography. This is in accordance with Bakhtin's argument in "Epic and Novel" that the novel has the capacity to novelise and shape the other genres. *Portrait* supports Bakhtin's view of the novel, as it loosens up the rigid rules of the traditional autobiography, and utilises all its possibilities removed from absolute realism. This distinctive feature of *Portrait* also enhances its status as a *künstlerroman*, since the novelistic traits are given greater prominence in the narrative. Thus, the novel demonstrates Joyce's parodic mastery of previous traditions, as he successfully merges traditional forms of narrative and transforms it into a work of art

3. Virginia Woolf and *Orlando*

Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; it is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.
(“Modern Fiction”, 106)

In this quote from the essay “Modern Fiction”, Virginia Woolf offers the reader her view on how life is experienced, and thus how realism should be constructed and depicted in fiction. Being a practitioner of literary modernism, her narratives are often fragmentary, aiming to represent real life the way it was lived. A fanciful depiction of the life of an extraordinary protagonist, *Orlando* includes a myriad of important themes which are all intricately related. It is a historical portrait of England from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, an exploration of gender and sexuality, a homage to the art of writing, as well as a celebratory praise of Vita Sackville-West, Woolf’s friend, and for some time, lover. Before she started writing the book, on 5 October 1927, Woolf made a comment in her diary about her intention with her new book. She aimed to write “a biography beginning in the year 1500 & continuing to the present day, called Orlando: Vita; only with a change about from one sex to another” (*Diary*, 161). Woolf would take on the role of the biographer and Vita would be her subject.

When we first meet Orlando, he is a young noble boy living in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. As a member of her court, he enjoys a life of wealth and has frequent female encounters. When Queen Elizabeth dies, he becomes a part of James I’s court and continues his lavish lifestyle. One night, during the winter of the Great Frost, he meets a young Russian princess, whom he will know as Sasha. They fall in love and plan to run away together, but Orlando waits for Sasha and she never arrives. Heartbroken, he seals himself off in his magnificent estate of 365 rooms and fifty-two staircases, determined to become a writer. He befriends Nick Greene, a famous poet, but their differences make their friendship brief. Orlando is once-again heartbroken when Nick writes a parody of him, ridiculing his lifestyle. As a consequence, he burns all his dramas and poems except the most significant one, “The Oak Tree”. Not long after, he decides to go abroad, and gets the chance when he is made England’s ambassador to Turkey by King Charles II, and he leaves for Constantinople. In Turkey he is given a dukedom and marries a Spanish dancer, Rosina Pepita. Constantinople is also the scene of the sex change. After the occurrence of an insurrection, Orlando falls in a trance and sleeps for several days before awaking from his trance in a different body. He has become a woman. She is not surprised by the change and gets used to her new body quite fast. Following the sex change, Orlando joins a tribe of gypsies who are bewildered by her material

values. She soon decides to leave them and goes back to England. At home, she reclaims her estate, and tries to adjust to her new life as a woman. Her literary aspiration gets her involved in literary circles, and spends time with famous poets like Alexander Pope and John Dryden. She also spends time with prostitutes. However, when the Victorian era enters, she feels pressure to yield to the “spirit of the age”, and finds a husband: Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire, a seaman with feminine traits to match Orlando’s masculine ones. While he is away at sea, Orlando finishes her poem, “The Oak Tree”, and re-encounters Nick Greene, now a literary critic who promises her to have it published. In 1928, Orlando is “struck” by the present, and she is 36 years old, a woman, and a published writer at last.

Due to all the conflicting elements of realism and fantasy in the narrative, *Orlando* is a text that is difficult to define. The balance between truth and fiction has from the time of its first publication in 1928 prompted questions of genre. For is it a novel? Or a biography? Or maybe a parody of both genres? Woolf has in fact created a paradox in that she has crafted an unrealistic tale within a genre that presupposes realism. While in the progress of revising the text in early 1928, Woolf herself described it as “all a joke; & yet gay & quick reading” (*Diary*, 177). In fact, concepts that can be associated with this novel include “satiric”, “wild”, “escapade” and “fantasy”, making this particular project a different kind of experiment compared with her other, more serious works of fiction. Furthermore, Woolf is heavily concerned with the representation and development of identity – an endeavour in which she regarded the genres of biography and fiction to be closely linked. With *Orlando*, she fully explored her artistic potential as she used a real life person, who was incidentally also a writer, as inspiration for the artist-to-be protagonist. Thus, in a manner comparable to Joyce’s efforts in *Portrait*, she manages to weave threads of the bildungsroman and künstlerroman traditions into the narrative, depicting Orlando’s personal development as well as his/her growth as an artist. In this chapter I am going to explore *Orlando* in terms of genre, beginning with the novel as a work of fiction. I here find it relevant to include the contemporary criticism of the novel as it sheds light on the genre confusion that *Orlando* prompted amongst the contemporary public. I am also going to discuss Woolf’s own theories of fiction that she articulates in her essays “The Art of Fiction” and “Modern Fiction” before I take a closer look at *Orlando*’s qualities as a bildungsroman and künstlerroman. Having done this, I am going to turn my discussion to the genre of biography, or more specifically, pseudo-biography. I am going to explore how Woolf mocks the genre of biography by basing the life of the protagonist on a real life person, as well as including a large number of fantastic elements into the narrative. Here, with a view to *Orlando*, I will incorporate Woolf’s own theories on

biography from her essays “The New Biography” and “The Art of Biography” into my discussion, since both essays express very definite ideas concerning what the biographer can and cannot convey about the subject. I hope to shed light on how Woolf with her sixth novel managed to create a piece of literature that goes beyond the established genres of the novel and of biography.

3.1 The novel

Joyce’s publication of *Portrait* in 1914-15 places his work within early modernism, when the movement was still young and fairly unexplored. Woolf’s *Orlando*, however, was published towards the end of the 1920s, during high modernism – the interwar period, when the movement had burst into full bloom. Although modernism in literature had been around since the 1890’s, the generic ambiguity of Woolf’s work was still confusing to readers. Joyce’s *Portrait* was first and foremost a novel that never claimed to be an autobiography, although the narrative contained elements of it. In *Orlando*, on the other hand, the biography aspect has been stressed much further – it is the most prominent genre in the narrative. The earliest edition of *Orlando* even featured the subtitle *A Biography*, and was placed amongst the biographies in the book shop instead of with the novels. People were thus to assume that the book in question was in fact a real biography, and consequently the Woolf couple (who had published the book themselves on Hogarth Press) would lose money because biographies did not sell as much as novels. Nevertheless, *Orlando* was a great success, possibly because it was an easy and entertaining read compared to Woolf’s previous novels, but perhaps also because of its experimental, humorous, and satiric nature. In my opinion, the strong elements of fiction in the narrative make it more readable, and contribute to its status as a novel.

Contemporary critics of *Orlando* were extremely divided in their opinions of the novel. The recurring theme of the criticism, regardless of whether it was good or bad, was the form of the novel. While Desmond MacCarthy, a reviewer for the *Sunday Times*, was full of praise, describing the novel as “a work of contemporary youthful sensibility”, “beautiful” and “original” (MacCarthy, 222), J. C. Squire wrote in the *Observer* that “this book is easier to read than to describe” (Squire, 227). He is referring to the fairy-tale like contents of the book which, in his opinion, is easily readable, but nevertheless makes it difficult to summarise and to understand the theme of the narrative. Further, he states that

This book, one feels, was conceived frivolously and chancily, and carried through with too painstaking a spontaneity and too little affection or respect for the reader, the intelligence in it being immeasurably in excess of the mirth, the

response to beauty, the emotional interest in history, morals, character or anything else. (Squire, 229)

In other words, Squire perceives the novel to be too experimental. Another English writer, Arnold Bennett, apparently concurs. Reviewing the book in the *Evening Standard*, he describes *Orlando* as “a very odd volume”, and “a play of fancy, a wild fantasia, a romance, a high-brow lark” (Bennett, 232). He also accuses *Orlando* of lacking substance, and ends his review by stating that he regards Woolf’s “alleged form as the absence of form” (Bennett, 234). In other words, Woolf’s “escapade” proved to be difficult for some readers not only to comprehend but also to accept, on the one hand as *Orlando* as a biography did not fulfill all the biographical requirements, on the other hand, *Orlando* as a novel was not fictitious enough. In her introduction to the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the book, Rachel Bowlby similarly claims that “*Orlando* is not exactly a fake biography, of a purely fictitious subject; but nor is it much like a biographical *roman-à-clef*,⁸ - in which the subject would secretly stand for some real-life personage” (Bowlby, xix). Instead, it was something in between, which made Bennett accuse the text of being lacking in form. It is also of interest that all the critics seemed to agree on one point: that *Orlando*, in fact, seemed to be a novel and not a biography. The presence of the fictional elements of the narrative obviously carried more weight than the biographical elements. In addition, it is an indubitable fact that the character of Orlando, although he/she is inspired by Vita Sackville-West, is *not* a real person.

As a novelist Woolf was intrigued by notions of time, space, consciousness, and the representation of character as she worked to create a new form of writing that would respond to the shape and experience of real life. She found the restrictions of the nineteenth century novel oppressive, as the life writing of the Victorian period tended to depict life from the outside, from a to z, with an emphasis on realism. What she sought to create was a complex depiction of life, one that does not merely record facts. Rather, Woolf wanted to create an art of fiction that was

Formally radical, subjectively real and aesthetically autonomous, expressive of a world in which the present seems dislocated from the past, experience is fragmented, multiple and limitless, and previous certainties about the physical world and our selfhood within it have been swept away. (Parsons, 3)

Woolf sought to write a “new realism” that was more inward looking than that of the nineteenth century. In addition to being a renowned novelist she was also a literary critic and essayist, and her essays “The Art of Fiction” and “Modern Fiction” are frequently cited

⁸ “Novel with a key”, a work of prose fiction in which the author expects the reader to identify actual people of the time in the narrative, despite their altered names

manifestos for the modernist novel. In “The Art of Fiction”, Woolf states that writers of fiction should be less concerned with naïve notions of reality and more with language, design, and art. Describing fiction, and in particular the English novel, as a “lady in trouble”, she states that this might be because “nobody grasps her firmly and defines her severely” (“The Art of Fiction”, 52). She also refers to the novelist E. M. Forster, a fellow member of the Bloomsbury Group whom she knew and admired, and the fact that he avoids theorising about fiction and drawing up rules for how a narrative should best resemble real life. Rather, the aspect of life in fiction should be expressed the way it is really lived and experienced. According to Woolf, the English critics are also “handicapped” in that they are in possession of what she refers to as an “unaesthetic attitude”. In other words, they do not perceive the novel to be a work of art. She refers to Russian and French literature, finding both possessed of an innovativeness and a creativity that elevate the novel from being a literary concept bound up by a set of rules, to the sphere of art. Towards the end of her essay, Woolf provides the reader with a “solution” to how the English novel can be revitalised, and she also outlines what the consequences could be:

If the English critic were less domestic, less assiduous to protect the rights of what it pleases him to call life, the novelist might be bolder too. He might cut adrift from the eternal tea-table of and the plausible and preposterous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble; the plot might crumble; ruin might seize upon the characters. The novel, in short, might become a work of art. (“The Art of Fiction” 55)

Woolf wrote “The Art of Fiction” in 1927, the year she started writing *Orlando*. In *Orlando*, she took her own advice, and chose to be bolder as a novelist. She broke free from all the established rules of the novel, and created a unique narrative completely separated from the common expectations of what a character should be like, his/her life-course, relationship to history etc. The main focus in “The Art of Fiction”, however, is art, and how literature can become art by depicting the real experience of life. In her “conclusion” to the essay, quoted above, she indirectly indicates that the novel becomes an artwork by breaking down and transforming the traditional components of the novel, like the plot and the characters. Then she demonstrates this transformative process in the narrative of *Orlando*, a process I will investigate further in my discussion of the bildungsroman and künstlerroman.

In her essay “Modern Fiction”, Woolf elaborates on the importance of a closer relationship between “real life” and fiction. She starts by stating that the modern practice of art, that is literature, is an improvement on the old, more established practice. If earlier writers

valued simplicity in the narrative, modern writers value complexity and thorough representations of inner life. Woolf categorises earlier novelists as “slaves” who have to follow a rule-bound pattern and craft a novel according to traditional standards. She also makes an important distinction between novelists who are “materialists” and “spiritualists”. The materialists are concerned with the body instead of the spirit, and according to Woolf, they “write of unimportant things” and “spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring” (“Modern Fiction”, 105). Spiritual writers, on the other hand, attempts to come closer to life by recording in literature the things of everyday life that move them in different ways, thus dismissing the old conventions of the Victorian novel. Woolf considers James Joyce as a so-called spiritualist, and holds in particular *Portrait* as well as *Ulysses* in high regard as examples of great literature. As Woolf feels strongly that every day is filled with different impressions and emotions, it is not possible to fit real life into the conformity of a Victorian novel. She asks: “is life like this? Must novels be like this?” (“Modern Fiction”, 106). Towards the end of the essay she has given us the answer. Along with the importance of the spiritual novelist who writes from a different perspective than that of the materialist-novelist, she underlines the fact that the genre of the novel is filled with vast and infinite possibilities. In the final lines of the essay, Woolf concludes:

‘The proper stuff of fiction’ does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss. And if we can imagine the art of fiction come alive and standing in our midst, she would undoubtedly bid us break her and bully her, as well as honour and love her, for so her youth is renewed and her sovereignty assured. (“Modern Fiction”, 110)

In “Modern Fiction” Woolf offers her own definition of modern fiction, its characteristics, and purpose. As she had her own conception of the possibilities of the novel, she articulated her own novel theory in many of her essays, in particular the two I have just mentioned. Based on her earlier works, Woolf was definitely a novelist, or a writer of fiction. When she decided to embark on her “writer’s holiday” and write *Orlando*, she leaped at the chance to demonstrate her contempt for the well known limitations for the novel genre. I argue that the novel assumes the form of an *anti-novel*, defined by Abrams as “a work which is deliberately constructed in a negative fashion, relying for its effects on the deletion of standard elements, on violation traditional norms, and on playing against the expectations established in the reader by the novelistic methods and conventions of the past” (Abrams, 203). *Orlando* represents Woolf’s declaration of independence from previous norms.

A main representative of high modernism, Woolf disliked the restraint of the nineteenth century novel. *Orlando*, being a fantasy novel/biography with a transsexual protagonist, is obviously a work of literature that defies categorisation. Nevertheless, in addition to containing clear biographical characteristics, the story of *Orlando* is associated with the narrative structure of the bildungsroman and the künstlerroman – perhaps modes of narrative exclusively tied to the novel genre, and yet imbued with distinctive generic traits of their own. I am now going to turn my attention to these genres, discussing how they contribute to the development of the narrative, as well as how they convey the personal and artistic development of the protagonist.

3.1.1 The bildungsroman and the künstlerroman

The narrative of *Orlando* begins *in medias res*⁹: “HE – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters” (13). Woolf takes the reader straight into the action with an opening sentence that is suggestive of both Orlando’s generic ambiguity, as well as the time period in which the narrative begins. The narrative opens like a novel, and Woolf is already in the act of presenting her readers with the irony that is ever-present throughout the narrative. For *Orlando* is an atypical novel and an atypical bildungsroman. It is even an atypical künstlerroman, since, in common with Stephen Dedalus, Orlando is coming of age both personally and as an artist. The atypical aspects of the narrative are emphasised by the fact that it never progresses in a straight line. Playing with the reader’s expectations, Woolf repeatedly alternates between the genres and the sub genres. This is visible already in the first page of the narrative. The opening sentence problematises the protagonist’s character, as Woolf tells us exactly what she intends the reader *not* to think, thus making the opposite obvious. The fact that almost nothing is clean-cut about Orlando and his/her extraordinary lifetime helps shape the novel as a bildungsroman and a künstlerroman that constantly have to adapt themselves to the various narrative changes. The two novelistic sub genres are also extremely symbiotic as they rely heavily on each other throughout the six chapters and are increasingly merged as the end approaches. The bildungsroman and the künstlerroman also have to adapt to each age the same way Orlando does, in a self-problematising manner.

The opening of *Orlando*, however similar to a novelistic opening, does not explicitly reveal the genre of the narrative. Having read the entire book, it is obvious that bildungsroman

9 The narrative starts “in the middle of things” instead of at the beginning.

traits are extremely present in the narrative, but this is not suggested in the opening sentence. In the opening pages of *David Copperfield*, a novel which I have referred to earlier, the protagonist's birth and childhood are made explicit, as the bildungsroman traditionally aimed to render the his/hers formative years from an early age into adulthood. Conversely, the *in medias res* opening of *Orlando* does not link the narrative to the traditional bildungsroman pattern, for the reader is never provided with any information about Orlando's life prior to the very first sentence in the narrative, when he "was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor" (13). Woolf scholar Melba Cuddy-Keane, characterises the opening of the narrative thus:

Although readers subsequently gain enough information to hypothesize a generalized situation, the words anterior to the first line are never explicitly revealed. No flashback situates the opening in medias res: we do not, as in epic, stand outside a story whose ordered structure we ultimately reconstruct. (Cuddy-Keane, 99)

Consequently, the beginning of Orlando's life story is not situated within the narrative, as it is stated on the very first page that he is sixteen years of age. The reader is thus not presented with his birth and early childhood. In fact, Orlando's childhood does not hold any interest to the biographer. It is rather his/her social, sexual, and historical mobility that are the determining factors of the coming-of-age process.

Interestingly, the *künstlerroman* is the first of these two concepts to manifest itself in the narrative, since the bildungsroman aspect initially is covered up by the *in medias res* beginning. At this early point in the narrative, when Orlando is a young noble boy in Queen Elizabeth I's court, he is working on a manuscript called "Æthelbert: A Tragedy in Five Acts" (16), as well as "The Oak Tree", which is to become his life's work. It is even stated that he "had written no more perhaps than twenty tragedies and a dozen histories and a score of sonnets" (23), all while being a courtier to the Queen. In other words, Orlando has started his artistic education, but he is still a young, naïve boy inexperienced with the ways of the world. His first experience with the harsh realities of life comes with the arrival of Sasha, a Russian princess. Overwhelmed by feelings of love that he has never experienced the likes of before, he reflects upon these new emotions: "Whom had he loved, what had he loved, he asked himself in a tumult of emotion, until now?" (38). He is shocked to realise that his only point of reference in this matter is his Queen. Orlando embarks on a passionate love affair with Sasha, full of youthful intensity:

Orlando would take her in his arms, and know, for the first time, he murmured, the delights of love. Then, when the ecstasy was over and they lay lulled in a swoon on the ice, he would tell her of his other loves, and how, compared with her, they had been of wood, of sackcloth, and of cinders. (43)

Woolf here channels Orlando's youthful naïvety about love. He is inexperienced and the episode with Sasha represents his first step on the way to maturity. The protagonist's first love is also a rite of passage quite common in the traditional bildungsroman. For Orlando, however, it ends in heartbreak as he is deserted by Sasha after having agreed to run away with her. The first chapter thus ends with Orlando, standing alone on the shore, cursing his former love: "Faithless, mutable, fickle, he called her; devil, adulteress, deceiver" (62), and his journey towards maturity has begun.

The six chapters of *Orlando* all have their own separate storylines, each one representing an important rite of passage in the protagonist's personal life, as well as in his/her life as an aspiring artist. Consequently, the narrative as a whole becomes episodic and fragmented, which is a typical characteristic of modernist writing. In the first chapter the main focus is on the beginning of Orlando's personal development, as he experiences intoxicating sensations of love for the very first time, followed by an excruciating heartbreak: "From love he had suffered the tortures of the damned" (78). The second chapter first and foremost documents Orlando's early literary efforts, as he is trying to deal with his heartbreak by committing himself completely to the realm of art and literature. The *künstlerroman* thus gains greater prominence in this chapter. Seret argues that "The *Künstlerroman* is a clearly defined literary genre by nature of its theme and structure" (Seret, 143). She elaborates:

Structure in the *Künstlerroman* complements thematic and character progression. An omniscient narrator, who is also the author's alter-ego, narrates chronologically the development of the artist-protagonist from early childhood to maturity. (Seret, 150)

I tend to agree with this assessment. Yet I want to add that, considered as a *künstlerroman*, the narrative fails on some levels. Woolf does not necessarily follow the most common framework for the genre, described by Seret in the quote above. First and foremost, Orlando is not Woolf's alter-ego, or even the omniscient narrator's alter-ego. Rather, he/she is inspired by Vita Sackville-West – a person who in no way was involved in the writing process. Also, the structure of *Orlando* does not only contribute to the *künstlerroman* structure. I would argue that Woolf seems to choose to include significant aspects of the genre where she perceives these elements to fit well into the narrative and help it move forward. In the first chapter, the narrative fails to fully communicate Orlando's love for literature and artistic aspiration to the reader. In the second chapter, however, the narrator confirms that his love for literature as well as artistic production in fact started when he was a courtier to the Queen: "he

was a nobleman afflicted with a love of literature” (71), and further: “The truth was that Orlando had been afflicted thus for many years. Never had any boy begged apples as Orlando begged paper; not sweetmeats as he begged ink” (74). I argue that the entire second chapter is dedicated to Orlando as an aspiring artist, and it is the only chapter in the novel where the importance of the bildungsroman is secondary to the künstlerroman. Unfortunately for Orlando, he has to suffer another heartbreak, one that is not afflicted with corporal love. This time it is his literary career that is at stake. Nick Greene, a poet who had visited him on his estate, writes and publishes a satire on Orlando entitled *Visit to a Nobleman in the Country* in which he ridicules Orlando and his hermit-like lifestyle. He is deeply hurt by the harshness of Greene’s words, declares that “Literature [is] a farce” (93), and as a result of having read Greene’s satire, he destroys “fifty-seven poetical works, only retaining ‘The Oak Tree’, which was his boyish dream and very short” (93). This experience represents the bildung aspect of the second chapter, yet in context of the künstlerroman. Once again Orlando has to deal with loss, however a different kind of loss than in the first chapter. I would argue that he “loses” his second great love, which is literature, and consequently has to deal with the fact that literature may not be his vocation after all. Nevertheless, he recovers quickly, as he is no longer the immature adolescent he was in the first chapter. He is a young adult, thirty years of age, and he is determined to keep writing: “‘I’ll be blasted’, he said, ‘if I ever write another word, or try to write another word to please Nick Greene or the Muse. Bad, good, or indifferent, I’ll write, from this day forward, to please myself’” (99). Towards the end of the chapter, he also resumes work on “The Oak Tree”, and the narrator notes that his literary style has changed and evolved: “he had changed his style amazingly. His floridity was chastened; his abundance curbed; the age of prose was congealing those warm fountains” (108). His love for literature and determination to be a writer is intact, and “The Oak Tree” is established as the most important, and self-determining artistic production that Orlando returns to regularly over the twenty formative years of his/her life. The poem becomes like a symbol of his/her personal growth as it captures Orlando’s state of mind throughout all the ages he/she lives through. It also captures the different literary modes from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. As a künstlerroman, however, *Orlando* fails to examine in depth the protagonist’s development as a writer, since it only provides the reader with the most superficial information about the his/her early literary effort. What it does, though, is to trace Orlando’s early fascination with literature, writing and the literary scene at different stages in history. As I have already mentioned, I find the second chapter to be the only part of the novel that is completely occupied with Orlando’s artistic vocation. In the third chapter, on the other hand,

the künstlerroman is located in the background, before it re-emerges more clearly in the last three chapters to accompany the bildungsroman.

When we are re-acquainted with Orlando in the third chapter, he has been appointed ambassador to Constantinople by King Charles. The main event of this chapter is Orlando's sex change when he falls into a seven-day slumber during an insurrection in the city, and wakes up as a woman: "He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us ... We have no choice left but confess – he was a woman" (132). At this point, an important shift occurs in the narrative, for as the protagonist changes sex, the bildungsroman changes as well. The point I am pressing here, a point insufficiently stressed by the critics of the work, is that Orlando's fantastic experience of sex change is the most important rite of passage in her life. It changes her fate and determines her place and opportunities in life. This is linked to and prompted by a radical change of the perspective and terms of the bildungsroman. Seen thus, the sex change is Woolf's way of critiquing the concept of bildung. Gregory Castle makes a point concerning bildung that is relevant in context of *Orlando* and the sex change:

In the classical Bildungsroman featuring a male protagonist, Bildung entails the coming into social existence of the self in a dialectical process involving reflexive interactions and accommodations with society. In the female Bildungsroman, this process is complicated by the fact that the very society that ought to permit such accommodations delimits or represses the process of self-development even before it starts. That is to say, it delimits or represses the idea of female self-development *on principle*. (Castle, 215)

Building on Castler's observation, I would argue that an important facet of Woolf's project is to re-shape the classical bildungsroman to correspond with female preconditions. By having the protagonist change sex in the middle of the narrative, she highlights the differences between a man's and a woman's relationship with society and other social institutions. Traditionally, a male protagonist in a Victorian bildungsroman would have a completely different relationship with the society than a female protagonist. This is due to the fact a female protagonist traditionally would have limited opportunities of self-development, and thus greater challenges in overcoming the boundaries that the society has created for her. Upward social mobility was more accessible for a man than for a woman, as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, a female bildungsroman published in 1847, well illustrates. In Brontë's narrative, Jane's only prospect for social advancement come with becoming a governess in the wealthy Mr. Rochester's household, and eventually marrying him. Her social standing prevents her from having unlimited possibilities in terms of achieving her goals. In a male

bildungsroman, on the other hand, the ultimate goal is always to become a gentleman and protagonists like David Copperfield achieve this by the means of education and general involvement with public life and the ways of the world – a sphere that women were usually cut off from. In my opinion, this tendency is clearly visible in *Orlando*. Woolf mixes the male with the female bildungsroman, most definitely as a part of her feminist project, and in order to critique the traditional bildungsroman. In the chapters where he is a nobleman, Orlando enjoys all kinds of high-ranked positions as a courtier to the Queen, an aristocrat in possession of a great estate, and as an ambassador to Constantinople. Once he has become a woman, however, she has to re-invent herself as her position in society has greatly changed because of the contemporary politics of gender. After her sex change, society to a larger degree limits and represses her possibilities of development. Her situation is further complicated because, post sex change, she in many ways stays exactly the same: “Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as she had been” (133). This very interesting and thematically highly significant sentence suggests that her personality is still that of a male English nobleman. She is the same person inside, but having become a woman changes and complicates her situation because her gender determines many of her preconditions. Upon her return to England, she reflects upon her new life as a woman: “All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it” (151), thus realising the challenge that lies in having to adapt herself to life as a woman. She also has to get used to the limited freedom that comes with her new gender. Back in England, she encounters a problem with the law when reclaiming her estate and home in Blackfriars, London: “The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing” (161). In other words, her legal rights have changed because of her gender and she is acquainted with some of the struggles that society imposes on women. Her greatest challenge, however, is to *become* a woman in terms of demeanor, appearance, spirit, and mind.

Orlando spends the majority of the eighteenth century exploring, and adapting herself to her new life as a woman, as well as further developing her literary abilities. The transition to womanhood seems to come natural to her, despite what one would have expected:

Her modesty as to her writing, her vanity as to her person, her fears for her safety all seems to hint that what was said a short time ago about there being no change in Orlando the man and Orlando the woman, was ceasing to be altogether true. She was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person. (179)

Gradually, Orlando's efforts to adapt herself to her new life as a woman are increasingly successful. As time passes by, she learns how to repress her male characteristics in favour of letting her female characteristics shine through. In other words, her *bildung* is successful, both in terms of gender and the spirit of the age. It is also interesting to note that, at this point in the narrative, Woolf is focusing equally on the *bildungsroman* and *künstlerroman* aspects. During the eighteenth century, she also encounters some of the great writers of the time, for instance Addison, Dryden, and Pope, holding them in high regard: "Admirals, soldiers, statesmen, moved her not at all. But the very thought of a great writer stirred her to such a pitch of belief that she almost believed him to be invisible" (189). Spending time with these great figures in literature enables her to develop her own style of writing, as they "taught her the most important part of style ... so that her style changed somewhat, and she wrote some very pleasant, witty verses and characters in prose" (202-3). This quote suggests that Orlando has adapted the literary style and techniques of the seventeenth century, which was the era of satire and witty poetry. Hence, I argue that throughout the narrative, the *künstlerroman* manifests itself in two ways. First and foremost, the story follows Orlando's development and coming-of-age as a writer-to-be. But it also traces the development of literary history itself from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. As a *künstlerroman*, *Orlando* is successful in that the protagonist is always on a search for her own place within the sphere of literature. Her artistic journey is atypical as she constantly has to alter her writing techniques in order to keep up with the literary "spirit of the age". The only «proof» of her literary development, however, is her poem "The Oak Tree", which she had been carrying around with her since the sixteenth century.

The Victorian era puts an end to the frivolous life Orlando has led up to this point. Again she feels trapped by the spirit of the age, since she as a woman is expected to adapt herself to the conservative values of the age, be demure, and look for a husband. The values of the Elizabethan age, the Restoration, and the eighteenth century had all come naturally to her. She had even inclined herself naturally to her life with the gypsies in Turkey, but she finds herself having feelings of strong opposition towards the spirit and values of the Victorian age. The narrator indicates that the reason for this struggle might be that Orlando had passed the age of thirty and that "the lines of her character were fixed, and to bend them the wrong way was intolerable" (233). Hence, Orlando has succeeded in establishing an authentic self. At this point, a traditional *bildungsroman* would have come to an end. The only thing lacking would be marriage – an important rite of passage that would traditionally

constitute the end of the narrative, as in the case of *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*.

Orlando, on the other hand, has an ambivalent view on marriage in an age that both glorifies and demands it. She finds the Victorian inclination towards marriage almost disturbing, and she applies her own need for someone to “lean upon” to the “spirit of the age”, as well as vowing that “[her] hand shall wear no wedding ring” (237). Nevertheless, fate does have marriage in store for Orlando, as Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire rides into her life, and “a few minutes later, they became engaged” (239). In Shelmerdine, Orlando recognises an equal. He can complement her character as she complements his:

For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other’s sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter at proof at once. (246)

Shelmerdine is the ideal partner for Orlando, as their personalities both possess masculine and feminine traits, and they are able to see the best qualities in their own gender as present in the other. They are both strong, complex personalities, who refuse to conform to the clearly divided gender roles of the Victorian age.

Ironically, it is during the Victorian era that Orlando’s life, both personally and in terms of her literary efforts, seems to fall into place. Although she finds this age immensely oppressive and difficult to adapt to, she manages to find a husband, and also finally decides to finish “The Oak Tree”: “She turned back to the first page and read the date, 1586, written in her own boyish hand. She had been working at it for close on three hundred years now. It was time to make an end” (226). And she does: “Orlando pushed away her chair, stretched her arms, dropped her pen, came to the window, and exclaimed, ‘Done!’” (259). I argue that the finishing of the poem that has followed her through three centuries, to Turkey and back, and through different eras in literary history is a rite of passage just as important as her marriage to Shelmerdine. In *künstlerroman* terms, she is no longer just an artist-to-be, but has found her artistic identity, and finally publishes “The Oak Tree”. She has thus paved the way for the twentieth century and the sixth and last chapter ends with Orlando, now a self-reflective woman in her thirties, a published writer with a husband and a son. She recognises her own *bildung* process, her own journey from the young noble boy attending to Queen Elizabeth to her present self as a confident, self-made woman in her thirties. Then, on the last page of the narrative, she is struck by the present, as “the twelfth stroke of midnight sounded ... the eleventh of October, Nineteen hundred and Twenty Eight” (314).

Orlando is an illustrative yet highly original example of a male bildungsroman turned into a possibly more successful female bildungsroman. At the beginning of the narrative, Orlando is a young and naïve boy, whose social standing secures him a myriad of opportunities and privileges. When he becomes a woman, however, her life literally changes overnight, and she is all of a sudden faced with struggles of a kind she was not familiar with before. Nevertheless, Orlando is a successful character, both in terms of the bildungsroman, and the künstlerroman, as Woolf refuses the limitations traditionally applied to a female protagonist of a bildungs- or a künstlerroman. She has Orlando accomplish the ideals of both, as she succeeds in creating her own authentic self and learns to co-exist with the society and the people around her, as well as accomplishing her life-long dream of becoming a published writer. However, it is important to exercise a certain degree of restraint in viewing *Orlando* as a significant example of either genre. Using a modernist strategy to destabilise the traditional forms, Woolf has made a hybrid out of the two novelistic sub genres, all in order to suit the fantastic and ever-changing life of her protagonist. Discussing Woolf's own theories on fiction, I emphasised her view that literature should aim to depict life as it is lived, instead of following a traditional set of rules established by earlier, more conservative writers. In her opinion, one way of meeting this challenge was to incorporate elements of truth into the narrative. Following her own advice, she chose to combine fiction with biography to create a novel that comes closer to "real life". Turning my discussion to *Orlando* as a biography, I will now explore how Woolf manipulates and plays with the genre not only to critique her literary fathers, but also to distance herself from the old tradition and create a work of art.

3.2 The pseudo-biography

In 1927, upon starting her sixth novel, Woolf wrote a letter to Vita Sackville-West in which she first described to her the project of *Orlando*. In the letter she stated that she "could revolutionise biography in a night" (*A Change of Perspective*, 429). Even though she never really did so, she managed to create "her own" fiction: an intricate blend of elements of the traditional novel and biography that would turn out to be something completely unconventional. When finished, *Orlando* had become a text that was not easily definable, mainly because of the obvious generic ambiguity. Woolf herself seems to have considered the narrative to be more of a biography than a work of fiction, as the first title of the book was *Orlando: A Biography*. However, this does not mean that she was ignorant of the traditional characteristics and values of the genre. In fact, she was highly conscious of the conventions

and history of the traditional English biography. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was principal editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* from 1885 to 1891. She grew up learning about her father's efforts in the *DNB*, becoming increasingly aware of its characteristics and, in her opinion, boundaries that were defined by the patriarchy of Victorian biographers. Traditionally, the aim of the biography is to commemorate the lives of "great men" and (more rarely) "great women" who have contributed to the national culture by various achievements worthy of remembrance, all in a historically accurate manner. Woolf found these guidelines and restrictions oppressive and opted for a change. She thus constructed the most fantastic and fanciful biography of them all. Traditionally, biographies share a common framework, and rites of passages like birth, marriage, ageing, and death are central to the narrative. One of *Orlando*'s most distinctive features, however, is to ridicule these exact rituals. The formal structure of biography is deliberately destabilised throughout the narrative, and our expectations as readers are repeatedly shaken and disrupted. Retaining many of the key traits of the Victorian biography, Woolf manipulates them to fit into the story of the protagonist's extraordinary life. Orlando starts out as the "great man" of the Victorian biography, however, half-way into the narrative, he becomes a woman, and a great one for that matter, as her process of *bildung* will show. Orlando's most important rite of passage is thus not a traditional one, like marriage. Rather, it is the supernatural, unexpected, and explicitly fictional experience of a change from one sex to another. Thus, Woolf made a profound break with Victorianism, as well as with her father's achievements and values as a biographer.

During the 1920s, a myriad of essays, books, articles, and discussions on the status and the methods of the biography emerged. In general, there was a great interest in biography, and many writers wanted a change away from the rigid rules and conventions of Victorian biography as represented by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. One of these writers was Woolf, and she wrote a number of essays on the subject. One of them was "The New Biography", an essay published in the New York *Herald Tribune* only weeks before she started working on *Orlando* in 1928, and which incidentally inspired her new literary project. In the essay, she attempts to indicate in what direction the development of the biography is headed. Woolf starts by famously introducing the concepts of "truth as something of granite-like solidity and ... personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility" ("The New Biography", 229) which ideally should be welded into a whole to better reflect life as it really is. In her opinion, earlier biographies failed to include the "rainbow-like" truths that illuminate personality. Hence, the Victorian biographies, which focused on the "granite-like" truths that could be verified by witnesses, tended only to portray dry empiric facts in chronological order. However, Woolf

still argues that the truth of real life and the truth of fiction, although both genuine, are explosively antagonistic. Nevertheless, she states that “[the biographer] is now more than ever urged to combine them” (“The New Biography”, 234). Building on these points, the artistic shaping of “facts” gained a greater prominence in Woolf’s New Biography. This intertwining of “granite” and “rainbow” is also linked to the fact that Woolf also calls for a new relationship between the biographer and his/her subject, one that would emphasise a greater equality between the two: “... the author’s relation to his subject is different. He is no longer the serious and sympathetic companion, toiling even slavishly in the footsteps of his hero. Whether friend or enemy, admiring or critical, he is an equal” (“The New Biography”, 231). The biographer is allowed to create and portray on his/her own terms, to select, interpret and shape the “facts” of the narrative. Thus, by being able to mix fact with fiction, as well as being an equal to the biographic subject, the biographer has the capacity to become an artist.

Woolf’s New Biography has a positive identity of its own, with its innovation, greater freedom for the author, and a more aesthetic and experimental narrative form. Nevertheless, much of its identity is also shaped by the fact that, perhaps first and foremost, it was a reaction against Victorianism and the writer of biography as a posthumous memorialisation. With *Orlando*, Woolf takes an enormous step away from the conservative “Great Men” approach to history and the lived life, and embarks on a fanciful journey that in no way resembles the homogenous image of the Victorian biography. I now proceed to discuss how Woolf approaches the established form of biography by manipulating traditional genre-specific characteristics to create an extraordinary depiction of her protagonist. I will start by considering the role of the biographer in the narrative, showing how Woolf uses him to mock the genre of biography.

3.2.1 The biographer/narrator of the mock biography

In *Orlando*, Woolf describes the protagonist from a conventional omniscient perspective in the third person. Narrating the story, she looks through the eyes of an often unreliable “biographer” who frequently changes style and tone to suit all the various changes in Orlando’s life. The biographer also has a tendency to leap into digressions, as well as offer vast and detailed descriptions of the milieu and historical backdrops for the many important stages in Orlando’s life. For instance the Great Frost in the early eighteenth century, or the damp cloud descending over Victorian England. Consequently, I would argue that the narrator immediately establishes him/herself as a “character” in the story, since he/she is always flexible and adapting to the different phases and emotional variations of Orlando’s life. If, for

a moment, we assume the biographer's role to approximate to that of a character, I find it relevant to comment on his/her gender. It would be natural to assume that Woolf herself takes on the role of biographer, as she obviously is the author of *Orlando*, and the protagonist is based on her intimate friend. However, already in the very first direct mention of the biographer we are told of his sex: "Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet" (14). In this quote, Woolf makes a subtle, but explicit statement that the biographer is male. Thus, she locates the biographer within the Victorian tradition, and she is able to satirize the biographical norms and conventions of her literary fathers, including her own father. She also manages to distance herself from the narrative by making a clear distinction between the biographer and herself, thus further implying that the biographer persona is a character in the narrative.

Despite having placed her male biographer within the Victorian tradition, Woolf still manages to follow the new "rules" she created for the genre in "The New Biography". Having stated that the biographer is to be his subject's equal, she goes on to define his new role within the biography:

Moreover, he does not think himself constrained to follow every step of the way. Raised upon a little eminence which his independence has made for him, he sees his subject spread about him. He chooses; he synthesizes; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become an artist. ("The New Biography", 231)

Taking full advantage of this new biographical independence, Woolf gives her biographer a distinct and identifiable voice in the narrative. In addition, she also has him make his own independent choices in the depiction of the subject, allowing him to create the story of Orlando that he "chooses to". Thus, Woolf does not involve herself directly in the narrative, as she is not the biographer. Rather, she provides her "traditional" biographer with a new freedom, all in order to mock the biography genre and highlight its shortcomings, as it traditionally was a genre entirely dependent on facts verified by witnesses and relatives. The role of the biographer is thus revolutionised in *Orlando*. Rather than following the rigid rules of his predecessors, *Orlando* makes up his own rules. The biographer frequently steps directly into the narrative and comments on different aspects of the protagonist's life. For instance, early on in the narrative, upon having met Sasha for the first time, Orlando compares her to a melon, pineapple, and an olive tree, as well as different things he liked when he was a child. In a parenthesis in the text, the biographer comments:

For though we must pause not a moment in the narrative we may here hastily note that all his images at this time were simple in the extreme to match his senses and were mostly taken from things he had liked the taste of as a boy. But if his senses were simple they were at the same time extremely strong. To pause therefore and seek the reasons of things is out of the question. (36)

In this passage, the voice of the biographer shines through as he tries to give an account of Orlando's inner personality by describing what Orlando means when he compares Sasha to the different things that he liked as a child. He thus ignores the rules of the Victorian biographer by including himself in the narrative, as well as giving an explanation of something that would never appear in a Victorian biography. In her article "Revolutionizing Biography: 'Orlando', 'Roger Fry', and the Tradition", Elizabeth Cooley observes that

Despite examples ... that place the biographer within the Victorian tradition, there is an essential contradiction in *Orlando's* biographer. While he superficially follows the traditional rules of biography, while he disparages poets and novelists for trying to express more than they can know, he blatantly defies his own rules and attempts to express the "reality of character" despite himself. (Cooley, 76)

The biographer is making an attempt to describe Orlando's personality and way of thinking, thus committing one of his many heresies against scientific objectivity, which was considered to be the chief value of the biography in the Victorian period. Another curious aspect of the biographer's comment is the *kind* of information he is sharing. Not only would it have been completely unimportant in a Victorian biography, but what source could possibly have verified this kind of information about Orlando's youthful preferences? This is an illustrative example of Woolf's mockery of the genre. She ignores the importance of exclusively including official fact, which was a determining attribute of the "old" biography. Her "conventional" biographer proves thus to be quite unconventional.

The biographer's first comment on the personality of his subject, quoted above, is only the first of many paradoxes in his character that Woolf created. The official evidence of biographers, historians, relatives, and eye-witnesses is consistently mocked in *Orlando*. However, Woolf's biographer often locates himself within the familiar landscape of traditional biography. In fact, the second chapter of the novel opens with a "definition" of the Victorian biography, and how it is to be carried out.

Up to this point in telling the story of Orlando's life, documents, both private and historical, have made it possible to fulfil the first duty of a biographer, which is to plod, without looking to right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth; unenticed by flowers; regardless of shade; on and on methodically till we fall plump into the grave and write *finis* on the tombstone above our heads. (63)

Besides offering a definition of the “old” biography, the biographer also states that this is the method he has been using in telling the story of Orlando up to this point in the narrative. Further, according to James Naremore, the passage takes the form of “an ironic apology for the biographer’s ‘difficulty’” (Naremore, 212) that is to present itself as the narrative progresses. Woolf’s biographer claims that he has come to an episode in Orlando’s life that is “dark, mysterious, and undocumented” (63), and that his duty as a biographer is to “state the facts as far as they are known, and so let the reader make of them what he may” (63). Here, a paradox immediately presents itself, since there has been no trace of any “documents” or verified facts. The biographer seems to have been more occupied with documenting Orlando’s personal preferences, his desire to write, and his despair upon losing Sasha. In addition, he constantly seems to be more inclined to dazzle his reader with poetic phrases than to document fact. At the end of the first chapter, when he realises that Sasha has left London without him, “Dazed and astounded, Orlando could do nothing for some time but watch the appalling race of waters as it hurled itself past him” (61). The biographer further demonstrates his poetic language when describing the details of an event that supposedly is confirmed by “historians”, The Great Frost. However, it soon becomes obvious that these quasi-historians do not necessarily provide a trustworthy account of the event:

The Great Frost was, historians tell us, the most severe that has ever visited these islands. Birds froze in mid-air and fell like stones to the ground. At Norwich a young countrywoman started to cross the road in her usual robust health and was seen by the onlookers to turn visibly to powder and be blown in a puff of dust over the roofs as the icy blast struck her at the street corner. (32-33)

In this quote, Woolf creates an extraordinary image of The Great Frost. However untrue, it is extremely descriptive of the scope and seriousness of the frost. Furthermore, as birds obviously cannot freeze in mid-air, and a young woman cannot turn into powder and be blown away, Woolf is using fiction to mock the historians. Instead of doing what they are expected to do, which is to guarantee for the biographical “truth” of the narrative, Woolf has them provide the narrative with verified “true” events that in fact prove to be undoubtedly fictitious. She thus manages to combine incompatible oppositions of fact and imagination, of “granite” and “rainbow”, as she dictated for herself in “The New Biography”. She intentionally defies biological and temporal truths, as well as the credibility of the historian, all in order to create the “reality” of Orlando’s fantastic life.

The biographer’s role as a historian is of utmost significance in the narrative. Traditionally, biography is intimately linked to history, as the narrative “plods” from the

subject's birth to his death, recording both historical and personal events that have an impact on his/her life. In the case of *Orlando*, however, Rachel Bowlby argues that

Nothing that Orlando's biographer says has to be taken at face value, still less as an expression of Woolf's values. But there is a play here between truth, whether biographical or historical or of some other kind, and the forms of its representation, which is indicative of one of *Orlando*'s seriously joking preoccupations. (Bowlby, xxviii)

This is an interesting observation. Aspects of truth are highly present in the narrative, however within a playful and joking framework that tends to consume the reader's attention. Consequently the truth can be easily overlooked, and I would argue that the mocking nature of the novel undermines the value of the truthful aspects. By having Orlando age 350 years, experiencing many different historical eras, and changing sex, Woolf mocks our expectations of the nature of historical change. The biographer/historian, who is traditionally an advocate for truth and realism, has in *Orlando* a rather cavalier attitude to his vocation. The role of the historian and official documents is explicitly mocked in the opening of the third chapter. Orlando has now been given a dukedom and the ambassadorship to Constantinople, and has entered the sphere of public life. Previously, the biographer has shared with the reader aspects of Orlando's thoughts and inner life. Now, however, he seems to be returning to the "old" biography, as he claims that from this period of Orlando's life, "we have the least information to go upon" (115). He goes on to explain that all the important documents relating to Orlando's career as an ambassador have been destroyed in a fire that broke out in the city during an uproar. The fire apparently

damaged and destroyed all those papers from which any trustworthy record could be drawn ... Often the paper was scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence. Just when we thought to elucidate a secret that has puzzled historians for a hundred years, there was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through. (115)

Producing a contrast to the practice in the previous chapters, official documents are here the "only" sources of information about Orlando's life. Woolf here continues her mockery of biography by commenting on the perishable nature of sources and documents that were traditionally used during the process of writing biographies. By doing so, she sheds light on the impossibility of reconstructing the past exactly as it was. This is due not only to the fact that documents perish in various ways, but also because our perspectives change and develop as time passes, making the past strange, and to a certain degree incomprehensible. I would also argue that, by referring to destroyed or missing sources, Woolf is making a satiric

comment on the dull nature of Orlando's ambassadorship and participation in public life, as the biographer all of a sudden has seized drawing on Orlando's thoughts, emotions, and inner life as sources for the biography. Rather, the biographer has started deciphering the scorched and torn documents preserved from the time Orlando served as an Ambassador to Turkey. Consequently, due to the lack of official documents, Orlando's life as an official in Constantinople does not constitute more than nine pages of the entire novel. The biographer strives to be completely factual at this point of the narrative, which may also explain why the passage dealing with Orlando's stay in Constantinople is so limited. He is attempting to stay "on the firm, if rather narrow, ground of ascertained truth" (126), but has to admit, in commenting on the eve of Orlando's sex change, that "nobody has ever known exactly what took place later that night" (126). Thus we can only assume that the description of the sex-change scene to have spawned from the biographers own imagination. The scene is written in the form of a fairy-tale like scenario, with the Ladies of Purity, Chastity and Modesty chanting over Orlando's sleeping body. Being in lack of official documents to prove this event, the biographer has violated his "first duty", and has rather made up an extremely fanciful tale that obviously cannot be true. The sex change scene thus stands in sharp contrast to the preceding documentation of Orlando's life in Constantinople, and it ends with the biographer re-assuming his dry, empiric, matter-of-factly tone: "Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since" (134). In other words, Woolf's biographer is an inconsistent narrator, and he does not hesitate to violate the rules of biography, and manipulate the facts to better express the *character* of Orlando, rather than just his/her various endeavours and accomplishments in life.

Woolf satirizes over the emptiness of empirical data throughout the entire narrative of *Orlando*. Verified empirical data is the backbone, or the "granite", of traditional biography. This enables the biographer to render the external life of the protagonist, but does not provide the reader with insight into his/her mind and inner thoughts. Hence, Woolf imbues the entire narrative of *Orlando* with the intangible, "rainbow"-aspects of life, which deals with his/her personality and character. Thus, the dry empiricism is complemented by aspects of intangibility, and the reader is presented with a multi-layered protagonist. Woolf succeeds in rendering the character of Orlando not as an empty "shell", but rather as a character with a dynamic, ever-evolving personality. Similarly, she also sought to avoid dry empirical renderings of the different ages Orlando lives through. She aims to capture "the spirit of the age" of each of the centuries Orlando lives through. Reading *Orlando*, and considering Woolf's treatment of history in the novel, one can easily assume that Woolf did not carry any

interest for historical writings. The truth is that, like everyone else in Bloomsbury, she was fascinated by it. However, she sought to create a “new” history in her own writings. In *Orlando*, she is dealing with historical subject matter, but with a focus on historical *consciousness* instead of the traditional representation of history as a series of more or less important events. Thus she attacks the “deadening empiricism of most biographical literature” (Naremore, 193). In Woolf’s opinion, the traditional biographer dealt with his subject’s “shell” instead of his soul, as the biographical approach was of a more superficial nature. Woolf, however, aims in *Orlando* to show her readers the world removed from the mere rendering of facts. With this in mind, she seeks to capture the “spirit” of each age Orlando lives through, instead of merely giving a brief description of the structure of the society in any given historical era. Orlando’s temporal mobility is also emphasised by the biographer ending and beginning chapters with extravagant summaries of the contrast between the age just gone and the one into which he/she is entering. Woolf thus marks the turnover from one century to another. One example is the end of the chapter IV, where the eighteenth century has come to an end: “With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun” (216). These closing words function as a bleak introduction to the nineteenth century and the Victorian period in English history. Chapter V opens thus:

The great cloud which hung, not only over London, but over the whole of the British Isles on the first day of the nineteenth century stayed, or rather, did not stay, for it was buffeted about constantly by blustering gales, long enough to have extraordinary consequences upon those who lived beneath its shadow. A change seemed to have come over the climate of England. Rain fell frequently, but only in fitful gusts, which were no sooner over than they began again. The sun shone, of course, but it was so girt about with clouds and the air was so saturated with water, that its beams were discoloured and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort took the place of the more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century. (217)

Woolf here marks the turn of the century with a parodic description of historical change, and she even links this event to a parallel change in the weather. In doing so, she satirises the role of the historian, as she uses the weather as a metaphor for historical change, and at the same time establishes the “climate”, socially as well as weather-wise, for the age Orlando is about to enter into.

According to Bowlby “Woolf’s own perspective derives from the nineteenth century literary interest in the idea of history as a matter of imaginative reconstructions rather than factual record” (Bowlby, xxxii). Along with accounts of the weather, she includes descriptions of other elements of the daily life in the various ages Orlando lives through, all in order to capture the intangible “rainbow”-aspects of his/her life. For instance, descriptions of food, clothing, and interiors are included in the narrative, perhaps because details like these all illuminate the differences between one cultural age and another. The biographer/historian notes that upon Orlando’s return to London after her stay in Turkey, the city has changed:

Stately coaches drawn by teams of well-fed horses stood at the doors of houses whose bow windows, whose plate glass whose polished knockers, testified to the wealth and modest dignity of the dwellers within. Ladies in flowered silk walked on raised footpaths. Citizens in brodered coats took snuff at street corners under lamp-posts (159).

This information enriches the narrative by providing the reader with more information about the milieu surrounding Orlando on a daily basis at different times in history. By including the kind of imaginative reconstruction that Bowlby mentions, the narrative becomes more dynamic and closer to real life than a Victorian biography. However, the biographer frequently contradicts this notion of accounting for every detail of Orlando’s surroundings. A few pages further into the book, his role is all of a sudden more similar to that of the traditional Victorian biographer. He thus announces the following:

To give a truthful account of London society ... is beyond the powers of the biographer or the historian. Only those who have little need of the truth, and no respect for it – the poets and the novelists – can be trusted to do it, for this is one of the cases where the truth does not exist. (184)

The biographer claims that there is not truth running through London society, and further emphasises the “rainbow” aspects of truth by leaving the task of rendering it to the novelists and poets, as the biographer is not qualified to deal with fiction. In my opinion, the biographer has a dualistic attitude to what constitutes a proper biography. The biographer combines imaginative reconstructions of the past presented as truth, with statements on the impossibility of rendering the past truthfully. This is a part of Woolf’s irony, as she has her biographer supplement the aspects of truth with fiction. In the next part of my discussion, I am going to consider how Woolf manipulates the traditional biography, and ultimately has the imagination triumph over the historical process that goes into writing a biography.

3.2.2 Manipulating the traditional biography

Orlando is a tease to the old conventions of Woolf's biographical fathers, whose aim was to keep fiction and real life separate. As she was very familiar with the traditional form of biography, Woolf made sure to incorporate all the most important and genre-determining features of the traditional biography into the discourse of *Orlando*. She included a preface, specific dates, photographs, a dedication, and an index. Traditionally, these features were all present in biographies to secure the elements of fact, history and realism in the narrative. In the case of *Orlando*, however, they are all present to create an *illusion* of realism, all within a fanciful, imaginative, and playful framework, provided by the many novelistic aspects of the book. Woolf's aim was to create a mock biography in which she adopts a pseudo-biographical strategy in order to satirise the traditional biographical form of Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. By doing this, she was able to manipulate the genre and thus forge a new, modern equivalent to the traditional Victorian biography.

In *Orlando*, Woolf was not concerned with creating a multi-layered fictional character, but rather with discovering and recreating a real personality. Vita Sackville-West would be her inspiration and her aim was to capture the "granite and rainbow" of her intimate friend. In a letter to Vita, dated 9 October 1927, Woolf tells Vita that she would "like to untwine and twist again some very odd, incongruous strands" in her to capture the "shimmer of reality which sometimes attaches to [her] people, as the lustre on an oyster shell" (*A Change of Perspective*, 429). Sackville-West in fact proved to be the perfect inspiration for the character of Orlando, for she embodied multiple roles, many of them amongst the ones that Orlando assumes throughout the narrative. Both Vita and Orlando share the same kind of temporal mobility, as Sackville-West was a writer, traveler, mother, lesbian, a diplomat's wife, and an aristocrat. Woolf saw her as someone who successfully managed to shift between different roles, which were exactly her ideal for Orlando. She thus provided her protagonist with a fantastic multiplicity of roles and identities that would change numerous times throughout the narrative. Orlando personifies Vita in his/her "role-play", from the respectable to the bohemian, the English and the cosmopolitan, and between different sexual orientations. Orlando is immediately identified as Vita's alter-ego, as the source of Woolf's inspiration is made obvious not only in the many similarities between the two, but not least because the novel is openly dedicated to Vita. We can thus safely state that the book does have a kind of basis in biographical fact, and Woolf has based parts of her narrative on historical sources. Cooley claims that the "factual aspects of Vita Sackville-West's heritage and personality are quite accurately portrayed in the heritage and personality of Orlando" (Cooley, 75). The

representation of these facts, however, is quite novelistically rendered. In doing this, Woolf follows her own advice from “The New Biography”, and opts for an artistic shaping of “facts” in *Orlando*. She also echoes her own theories in her diary, upon describing her new literary project: “the balance between truth and fantasy must be careful. It is based on Vita, Violet Trefusis, Lord Lascelles, Knole &c.” (*Diary*, 162). Vita herself assisted Woolf by providing her with different kinds of factual information and sources. One of the sources Woolf has drawn heavily on while writing *Orlando*, was Sackville-West’s own 1922 publication, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, a biography of the grand country estate in Kent which had been in the possession of her family since 1566. In *Orlando*, the biographer provides detailed descriptions of the protagonist’s estate in England. For instance, during the seventeenth century, it was furnished “with rosewood chairs and cedar-wood cabinets, with silver basins, china bowls, and Persian carpets, everyone of the three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms which the house contained” (104). In the explanatory note that Nigel Nicholson, Sackville-West’s son, provided for *Orlando*, he mentions that the Knole estate in fact contained three hundred and sixty-five rooms, one “to each day of the year” (325), as well as fifty-two staircases. He thus confirms that all the descriptions of Orlando’s estate are based on the Sackville-West estate. However, Woolf adapted freely the information and detailed descriptions she found in Sackville-West’s account of Knole to the services of fiction in *Orlando*. One of the most characteristic traits of Woolf’s “biography” is exactly this: her treatment of the balance between fact and fiction. I have stressed that the legitimacy of a traditional biography is entirely dependent on facts that are verified by witnesses, as well as the subject’s family and friends. As *Orlando* is only loosely based on a real person, and real events, Woolf has to invent the rest, and close the realistic “gaps” with fiction. One significant implication is that this is necessarily done in all writing of biography, and even in history-writing. Both these genres are possessed of more elements of fiction than many biographers and historians are ready to admit. Linking Sackville-West’s *Knole and the Sackvilles* to Woolf’s writings on fiction and biography, it becomes clear that *Orlando* is not just a fantastic story inspired by her intimate friend. It is also a response to Vita’s own writings, and a commentary on the relationship between “fact” and “fiction”. Cooley argues that “In *Orlando*, [Woolf] succeeded by dressing her biographical portrait in the vestiges of fiction. She employed humor, satire, and invention and defied temporal and biological truth in order to express the ‘reality’ of Vita Sackville-West” (Cooley, 72). I agree with this assessment. Woolf uses fiction where it is needed to enhance, shape, and intensify the “truth” of her intimate friend. Orlando is created

in Vita's image, however on Woolf's terms. Thus, as readers, we can assume that in reading *Orlando*, we are introduced to the version of Vita that Woolf herself knew and loved.

One of the most striking features of *Orlando* that greatly adds to the generic ambiguity of the narrative, are the eight pictures Woolf chose to include. These pictures, which are reproductions of both paintings and photographs, function as a clear allusion to the Victorian biography. Traditionally, pictures were not only expected in a biography, they were required. By contrast, pictures are never, nor have they ever been, required in a work of fiction. This is because their main function is to serve as evidence for the claims being made in the text about the life of the subject. A biography requires pictures as evidence that these events really happened. A novel, on the other hand, is not a genre associated with realism. Pictures of the events being described in the narrative would not even exist, as the events are fictional.¹⁰ This is basic knowledge to the readers of both fiction and biography, and what Woolf does with *Orlando* is to disrupt the readers' conventional expectations of either genre. In her article "Virginia Woolf and the Problematic Nature of the Photographic Image", Helen Wussow states that "in *Orlando*, [Woolf] ridicules the manipulation of photographic 'evidence' in biographical studies" (Wussow, 2). Further, she argues that Woolf "confronts the codes we use to approach the concept of evidence and how it should be read. She undermines the supposed faithfulness of a biography toward its subject by presenting false photographic evidence" (Wussow, 2). Drawing on Wussow's assessment, I argue that Woolf deliberately utilises the "false truth" the pictures represent to create a "new truth", as they do not depict the characters in *Orlando*. The picture that supposedly shows "The Russian Princess as a child" (Figure 2) is in reality a photograph of Angelica Bell, Vanessa Bell's¹¹ daughter, in a fancy dress. But, as readers, we are expected to accept the picture as a depiction of Princess Sasha. Even more interesting is the fact that Vita Sackville-West herself appears in some of the pictures. The picture showing "Orlando about the year 1840" (Figure 6) is of Vita in a costume and "Orlando on her return to England" (Figure 5) is a photo of Vita taken when she was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1927. These are pictures Vita herself provided Woolf with upon request. In fact, Woolf was very specific about what kind of pictures she wanted for her novel. In a letter to Vita dated 30 October 1927, she wrote: "Look here: I must come down and see you, if only to choose some pictures. I want one of a young Sackville (male) temp. James Ist: another of a young Sackville (female) temp. George 3rd" (*A Change of*

¹⁰ There are exceptions to this "rule", as some novel's include pictures. Contemporary examples are Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. However, these pictures have to be perceived with a certain caution, since they can be arranged or re-constructed.

¹¹ Woolf's sister

Perspective, 430). She thus selected both photographs of Vita and paintings of some of her male relatives. In the narrative, she then compares the pictures:

If we compare the picture of Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman we shall see that though both are undoubtedly one and the same person, there are certain changes. The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same. (180)

The two pictures Woolf is referring to in this quote are “Orlando as Ambassador” (Figure 4), and “Orlando on her return to England” (Figure 5). In the comparison, quoted above, Woolf is not only drawing on the obvious family resemblance between Vita and her male relative depicted in the painting, she also mocks her own “photographic evidence” by making a point out of telling the reader that the two people in the pictures are “undoubtedly one and the same person”. While the resemblance could make Woolf’s claim that they are the same person quite convincing, at the same time she negates this claim with her mocking remark of the two being the same person. Again, as in the novel’s very first sentence, Woolf tells us what she wants us *not* to think. In my opinion, the pictures are not included to convince the reader of Orlando’s existence. Rather, I believe Woolf included them to establish a link between Orlando and the Sackville-West family. It would be safe to assume that at the time the novel was published, its contemporary readers would immediately recognise Vita in some of the pictures, as she too was a public figure at the time. Thus, Woolf asks a lot of her readers. Not only must we recognise Vita in the pictures, we must also perceive her as Orlando, and view the picture as evidence of his/her existence. Woolf was highly aware of the manipulative power of images, and in *Orlando* she used a set of carefully selected pictures which she brings together with fiction. Thus, a powerful symbiosis is constructed, and concepts of meaning are altered. Wussow notes that “in *Orlando* both image and text are jokes and the best joke of all is on the reader” (Wussow, 3). By mixing the fictional story of Orlando with the pictures of the real Vita Sackville-West, Woolf has created an alternative truth, and the reader is constantly confused about the identity of the persona in the pictures. The rational answer to this question would be that it is definitely not Orlando, as he/she is a fictional character. But neither is it Vita. It is simply a reproduction of a picture of Vita Sackville-West that *represents* the character of Orlando.

As we have seen, Vita Sackville-West figures prominently in Woolf’s narrative. Her name is on the dedication page, she is present in the photographs, and many of her personal

characteristics are reflected in Orlando. Thus, the fiction is linked to a real person. However, Vita is not the only real person who is being “portrayed” in the narrative. The novel traces the history of the English throne that takes place during Orlando’s life-course, starting with Elizabeth I, and ending with George V. Woolf also includes a large number of famous poets, novelists, and essayists, in short: the “great men” of literary history, into each age represented in the narrative. By doing so, Woolf manages to portray and establish a cultural and political backdrop for the narrative that suggests realism. Further, she manipulates and plays with the historical accuracy that she has established in the backdrop, thus violating the rules of biography. In the fourth chapter, upon Orlando’s return to England, the captain of the ship going up the Thames,

obligingly informed her that even now – if she turned her head a little to the left and looked along the line of his first finger ... yes, there he was – one might see Mr Addison taking his coffee: the other two gentlemen – ‘there, Ma’am, a little to the right of the lamp-post ... were Mr Dryden and Mr Pope. (160)

Here the pseudo-biographer makes one of his many interventions in the narrative, this time by adding a footnote serving to correct Captain Bartolus’s obvious mistake: “The Captain must have been mistaken, as a reference to any textbook of literature will show; but the mistake was a kindly one, and so we let it stand” (160). The mistake the biographer is referring to here is the fact that the age of the three famous writers differs considerably, and that the three of them spending time in a coffee-house together would have been very unlikely, perhaps even impossible. Woolf uses the historical facts and figures to convey the spirit of the different ages of Orlando’s life. Simultaneously, she constantly and deliberately disrupts the course of history, and the historical accuracy is secondary to the fanciful experiences of the protagonist. Woolf does not give a representation of the past “as it was”, but rather allows herself to be artistic within a genre that traditionally has claimed realism, and closes the realistic “gaps” with fiction to create a coherent narrative.

Throughout the narrative, Woolf consistently focuses on the representation of life. An important aspect of *Orlando* is the fact that it is not written from a posthumous perspective. When the narrative ends, the biographical subject is still alive, and the typical emphasis on death is avoided. Since biographies were traditionally written after the death of the subject, they typically produced a “tension between a posthumous memorialisation of a life and the attempt to grasp the ‘life’ as it was lived” (Marcus, 94). In the Victorian tradition of Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, there had always been a paradoxical connection between biography and death, which consequently limited the focus on the representation of life. In *Orlando*,

however, Woolf made a break with her biographical fathers by removing death as the ultimate rite of passage entirely. Her focus is on the *life* of her protagonist, a lifetime that she has her biographer/narrator reflect upon throughout the narrative, and even link to Woolf's own present time. At the beginning of the second chapter, when Orlando is still a man, alone in his stately home and attempting to write, the biographer reflects upon the intangibility of life, and thus also on the difficulty of truthfully conveying Orlando's personality to the reader:

Nature, who has played so many queer tricks upon us, making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbows and granite, and stuffed them into a case, often the most incogrous, for the poet has a butcher's face and the butcher a poet's; nature, who delights in muddle and mystery, so that even now (the first of November 1927) we know not why we go upstairs, or why we come down again, our most daily movements are like the passage of a ship on an unknown sea ... (75)

Woolf here has her biographer not only reflect upon the mystery that is passage of time, and therefore life. She also links the narrative to elements of real life, thus intricately combining facts with fiction. Woolf brings her own present time into the narrative, as I find it safe to assume that the date mentioned in the quote is the day she wrote these words. She also alludes to her own essay "The New Biography", with the phrase "rainbows and granite", thus relating her own theory of biography to the narrative, as well as conveying the intangible nature of Orlando's life. By doing this, Woolf manages to create an imaginative unity between past and present, fiction and reality. When the narrative comes to an end, Orlando's life has not. A part of her journey is over, but as readers, we are left with the impression that she is starting another. She is a published writer with a husband and a son, has reached a new level of self-awareness, and is no longer struggling with the uncertainties and limitations as she did when she was a naive youngster. I argue that the only death at the end of Woolf's biography is of the "old" Orlando. Woolf insists on the importance of experience. Orlando has participated in other selves, different ages, and both sexes, and in the end, she has overcome all of these transformations to finally become a woman with a strong self-awareness and integrity. *Orlando* thus represents a victory over time and death.

3.2.3 The Art of Biography

In 1939, more than ten years after *Orlando* appeared, Woolf published "The Art of Biography", an essay which deals with the shift away from what she dismissed as the too selective and restrictive modes of the nineteenth century biography. The essay opens with Woolf asking whether biography is an art. Her answer is yes, but it is a young and restricted

art. In Woolf's words, "the novelist is free, the biographer is tied" ("The Art of Biography", 221). While the novelist can "hide" behind fiction, the biographer traditionally had to be faithful to history and truth. The author needed to gather information, as well as verify it as truth. The novelist, on the other hand, enjoyed greater freedom in his/her creation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the situation changed for the biography, and the biographer gained more freedom. Woolf singles out Lytton Strachey as a practitioner of "the new generation", as his accomplishments as a biographer are more experimental and innovative than those of Leslie Stephen. With his two biographies on the great English Queens, Elizabeth I and Victoria, Strachey demonstrated that it is possible to view biography either as a craft or as an art. Also, in the case of Queen Victoria there was little possibility for Strachey to be inventive, as her life was very well documented. In Queen Elizabeth's case, on the other hand, very little was known, thus giving the biographer room to use his imagination. The latter is what Woolf perceives to be the ideal for the biography, as it balances itself between truth and fiction. If the biographer invents some of the aspects of his/her subject's life, there is nobody who can identify what is truth and what is fiction. Woolf was occupied with these kinds of problems within the biography genre. Often, imaginative truth must co-exist with factual truth in order to close the gap in great people's lives. Moreover, Woolf addresses the question of "greatness" asking whether only the lives of "great men" deserve to be recorded in a biography. She asks: "Is not anyone who has lived a life, and left a record of that life, worthy of biography – the failure as well as the successes, the humble as well as the illustrious? And what is greatness? And what smallness?" ("The Art of Biography", 226-227). What terms like these constitute is in fact a question of definition, and it is such problems that make Woolf draw the conclusion that biography is a genre possessed of potential for further development.

With a view to "The Art of Fiction", I argue that, in writing *Orlando*, Woolf took advantage of the realms of both realism and fiction. Not only is it a biography, it is also a fantasy. The reason why it is so hard to define in terms of genre is that it is neither entirely true nor wholly fictitious. It can never fully claim any of these traits, which was quite possible Woolf's intention in writing *Orlando*. The ambiguity of the work was confusing to the early critics, along with the subject Woolf chose for her biography. She deliberately wrote against the "great men" notion by creating a protagonist based on Vita Sackville-West, who was both male and female, ageing but thirty years over a time period of over 350 years. Towards the end of the narrative, she underlines her own break with the realistic concept of time in the biographies of her father, with a direct and mocking reference to the *DNB*: "The true length of

a person's life, whatever the *Dictionary of National Biography* may say, is always a matter of dispute. For it is a difficult business – this time-keeping; nothing more quickly disorders it than contact with any of the arts” (291). With only one sentence, Woolf sums up her project in *Orlando*: to create a narrative based on a genre that claims realism, mix it with imagination and artistry, and write about her subject without limitations. She wanted to create a work of art, worthy of her friend Vita, whom she had admired greatly and been in love with. She thus neglects realism in favour of fantasy and fiction, probably to convey a sense of Vita as a woman committed to her own art, and living her life without constraint. Throughout the narrative, she mocks all the established, rigid rules and norms of the Victorian biography that her father so highly regarded. The “mock biography” had thus seen the light of day.

3.3 Woolf's “biografiction”

Upon finishing *Orlando*, Woolf wrote in her diary on the 22 March, 1928: “Yes its done – Orlando – begun on 8th October, as a joke; & now rather too long for my liking. It may fall between stools, be too long for a joke, & too frivolous for a serious book” (*Diary*, 177). She had written the book in a genre not easily definable, and yet she wanted to sell it as a novel, and not to be accused of having written one. It was Woolf's good fortune that the literary mode she was working within was modernism, which offered her “biografiction” a chance on the literary scene. The emergence of literary modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century greatly revitalised the contemporary novel. A large number of new theories and practices surfaced in the wake of the new literary debate, and Woolf's contributions are amongst the most noteworthy as she created new ideals both for the novel and for the biography. *Orlando* is a novel that fantasises a world without genre, where Woolf's “escape” is not only possible, but also considered to be a work of artistic craft. In her theories on fiction and biography she articulates the need to represent life “as it is lived”, as well as the need to combine “the reality of truth” with the “reality of fiction”. In “Modern Fiction” she argues for greater freedom for the novelists, claiming that no method should be forbidden, and that one should be able to write without limitations. In *Orlando*, then, she demonstrates this theory by emancipating herself from all the established rules of the traditional form. Similar to the novel, the biography too had to be reconfigured according to the modernist aesthetics, as changes in the genre of biography parallel changes in the novel. We have seen that this new form of biography not only allowed elements of fiction to be more present in the narrative than ever before. It also allowed Woolf to portray Vita Sackville-West

in an inventive and playful manner, whilst at the same time being “truthful” where she saw it fit. Vita herself, in fact, reacted with total delight upon reading the novel she inspired. She expressed her admiration in a letter to Woolf, written on 11 October 1928: “For the moment, I can’t say anything except that I am completely dazzled, bewitched, enchanted, under a spell. It seems to me the loveliest, wisest, *richest* book that I have ever read, - excelling even your own Lighthouse” (Sackville-West, 304). The narrative of *Orlando* is cleverly constructed, and because of the presence of the typically novelistic sub genres of the bildungsroman and the künstlerroman we do not quite recognise it as a “real” biography. We catch glimpses of Vita Sackville-West in the narrative, on the dedication page, and in the pictures, and at the same time we know that Orlando is a character in his/her own right who is going through a process of bildung similar to that of a hero in a Victorian novel. *Orlando* is thus far from historically accurate, and fails as a traditional biography. However, to have *Orlando* fall short of the Victorian biography in terms of the traditional and conventional practice was Woolf’s intention. Believing fiction to be closely linked to the genre of biography, Woolf sought to adopt the methods of modern fiction to the form of biography to have them co-exist in a symbiosis that can either be described as a biographical novel or a novelistic biography. In my discussion of *Orlando*, I have referred to this intertwining of genres as “anti-novel” and “mock-biography”, both representing independence from the previous forms. These terms balance each other, as the anti-novel is a work which is deliberately constructed to violate the traditional norms and play against the natural expectations of the reader. Similarly, the mock biography plays against the reader’s expectations of historically accurate realism that was traditionally the single most important trait of the genre. I would argue that while anti-novel and mock biography are both accurate and correct terms to use in the case of *Orlando*, they should be used with a certain degree of caution. In my opinion, *Orlando* does not “attack” biography. Rather, Woolf aims to problematise and reflect on the genre, thus challenging traditional Victorian biography which, in her opinion, was a pretentious, rigid genre based on dry empiricism. Rather than just being a critique of biography, *Orlando* is a significant contribution to the literary debate in the modernist period, as Woolf here develops a new technique of biography writing. Knowing that what is traditionally *not* recorded in a biography can be just as true as what *is* recorded, Woolf sheds light on these “truths” by using fiction to close the narrative “gaps”. *Orlando* makes a break with conventions of genre by essentially turning biography into fiction. Thus, as opposed to what many of her contemporary critics thought, Woolf did not really write a biography, nor did she revolutionise the form.

4. Conclusion

This thesis has been exploring the realisation of genre in Joyce's *Portrait* and Woolf's *Orlando*. My focus has been on the two works as novels including the sub genres bildungsroman and künstlerroman, as well as on the two works as (auto)biographies. Overall, my aim has been to indicate how this manipulation and play with genre fits into the modernist project of my two chosen authors, as well as showing how they contributed to the evolution of the novel during the early decades of the twentieth century.

We have seen that, on the surface, the two novels are strikingly similar in terms of theme and content, as they are both pseudo-(auto)biographical renderings of the formative years of the artist-protagonists Stephen Dedalus and Orlando, who are both inspired by real-life people. Perhaps the most important similarity is the fact that both novels are genre challenging works of literature which are constantly subjected to the authors's efforts to manipulate and disrupt the readers' natural expectations of the genres in question. However, as I hope to have shown in the two main chapters of my thesis, it is also possible, as well as important, to make a valid argument for the differences between *Portrait* and *Orlando*. Although the similarities between the two novels may be the more striking, I find the differences to be of greater importance, as they are significantly different in structure. In my close readings of Joyce and Woolf's works, this structural difference has proved to be a determining factor in terms of the realisation of the various genres within the texts. Throughout my thesis, the difference between the two texts has also been highlighted by the structure of the two main chapters. I have treated the two main genres, the novel and the (auto)biography with unequal attention due to the fact that Joyce and Woolf themselves have done exactly the same when crafting their novels. Consequently, in terms of structure, there is a stronger aspect of the novel in *Portrait*, whilst the genre of biography is dominant in *Orlando*. This has contributed to the shaping of my discussion of the two texts, yet always with the implications of the subordinate genres in mind.

In my discussion of the two works as novels, I stressed the fact that the novel genre was undergoing a significant development during the modernist period. Drawing on both Bakhtin's "Epic and Novel", and Woolf's theories expounded in her essays "Modern Fiction" and "The Art of Fiction", it becomes evident that both *Portrait* and *Orlando* are examples of the novel in development. By contrast, the traditional Victorian novel was united by a set of rigid, unchangeable rules and norms that limited its representations of real life, as well as its

possibilities for evolution. Joyce and Woolf however, are exploring the novel as “genre-in-the-making” (Bakhtin, 11). They parody the established conventions, opting for greater freedom to write without traditional generic limitations. They both seek to re-invent the novel in their own terms, and thus introduce a new method of representing the truth of “real life”. This re-invention is particularly obvious in Woolf’s novel, since her narrative is the more fanciful and fantastic, with a protagonist who ages 350 years and changes sex mid-way. Although more subtle in his inventiveness, Joyce also took advantage of the opportunity to manipulate the old norms and rules of the novel, producing an artistic equivalent to the old novel structure. With this in mind, both Joyce and Woolf underscore Bakhtin’s theory of the novel as a young, ever-evolving genre. They have both distanced themselves greatly from the Victorian novel, which proves that the novel is not a fixed concept. My close reading of both *Portrait* and *Orlando* reveals that the novel is a genre that has the capacity to influence other established genres, and provide them with various “novelistic” qualities.

However, this becomes apparent only when we consider the other genres that are present in the narratives. To reach their goal of establishing a “new truth” in their fiction, paradoxically, both Joyce and Woolf employ one of the most conservative literary forms to their novels: the bildungsroman. This form, which signifies a coming-of-age story, lies at the core of both novels since the formation of Stephen’s and Orlando’s characters is of crucial interest to the reader, as well as to the progression of the narrative. In both novels, the protagonists develop from young, naïve, and inexperienced boys into adulthood and maturity. The two protagonists also struggle with many of the same issues, as they are both experiencing feelings of alienation, disintegration, and isolation from society, in addition to the fact that they are both aspiring artists. The development aspect is thus of major importance in both novels, and the overall thematic concerns are thus more or less the same. Furthermore, it is of crucial interest that this development takes place on two levels. As the protagonists not only develop personally but also as artistically, the bildungsroman itself also develops throughout the narrative. As the formation of the artistic soul gains greater prominence towards the end, the künstlerroman relieves the bildungsroman as the dominant form of narrative. However, these two forms of development-narration are realised differently in *Portrait* and *Orlando*, and they are also of unequal importance. My reading of *Portrait* has shown that the novel starts out as a bildungsroman in the first chapters, where Joyce’s depiction of Stephen’s childish nature is marked by the use of “baby talk” and immature ponderings on life. In the last two chapters, when he has become a youth of greater maturity and self-awareness, the künstlerroman has become the paramount genre. In *Orlando*, on the

other hand, the bildungsroman is more successfully realised than the künstlerroman. Woolf focuses mainly on her protagonist's personal development, and his/her artistic formation occurs throughout the narrative on a subordinate level. While Joyce consistently focuses on a steady curve of development from the personal sphere into the artistic sphere, and from the bildungsroman into the künstlerroman, Woolf's focus is always on her protagonist and his/her different endeavors in life, literature being but one of them. My close readings of the two novels reveal that Joyce and Woolf are challenging the limits not only of the conventional bildungsroman form, but also of the novel in general. In the case of *Portrait*, the künstlerroman emerges as an alternative to the bildungsroman. Conversely, in case of *Orlando*, the bildungsroman is the more important of the genres, and the künstlerroman functions as an extension of this already established form.

Absolutely central to the narrative in both *Portrait* and *Orlando* is the fact that they are both in possession of (auto)biographical qualities, as they are based on real-life people. We have seen that the contemporary critics and readers of the book, who knew enough about Joyce and Vita Sackville-West to recognise them in the characters of Stephen and Orlando, were consequently very confused and uncertain whether to consider the novels as fiction or as (auto)biographies. The fact that the two protagonists are both inspired by real-life people lies at the very core of the novels, and the readers' reception of them is influenced by his or her knowledge about Joyce and Sackville-West. In my discussion of *Portrait*, I argued that instead of being dependent on absolute realism, and aiming to render every detail of his own adolescent life (as he attempted to do in his failed project *Stephen Hero*), Joyce sought to select the most important events of his own spiritual and artistic coming-of-age and craft them into exactly the story he wanted to tell. In addition, he used his imagination and invented both characters and events that would contribute to the creation of a coherent narrative aiming to tell the story of the young, Irish Catholic and artist-to be. However, my close reading has shed light on the fact that in addition to being a portrait of Stephen, and of the artist as a young man, the novel is also a portrait of the political, religious, and social climate in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. This adds to the realism in the novel: Stephen is not only located in real space, but in a society highly reflective of the time in which Joyce himself grew up. Thus, it would be a plausible assumption that Stephen's reasons for leaving Ireland in the end, would not differ considerably from those of Joyce himself. *Portrait* is a literary work of a certain duality. Joyce stays close to realism, as he includes many specific events from his own life into the narrative, as well as from Irish history. Still, by providing his characters with his own names, and inventing some of the key events in the book, for instance

the scene of Stephen's epiphany, Joyce makes an intentional move towards fiction. The result is an intricate blend of truth and imagination, written by Joyce not necessarily to tell the readers the truth about his own life, but rather to present his readers with his own conception of a well crafted and engaging story.

Similar to *Portrait*, *Orlando* is to a considerable degree anchored in reality. Not only is the protagonist inspired by Vita Sackville-West, whom he/she shares many personal and artistic characteristics with, but the events take place in real time and space. Woolf constantly refers to different historical figures and events that helped define the different ages Orlando lives through, thus creating a realistic backdrop for the narrative. In her own theory on biography, she refers to the need for biographical writers to combine the "granite and rainbow" of truth and fiction, indicating that the intangible truths can be just as real and important as solid facts. Further, this artistic shaping of "facts" allows Woolf to position her narrative closer to fiction, while still working within a genre that traditionally has claimed more or less absolute realism. She took advantage of the granite-like facts of Sackville-West's heritage in addition to the multiplicity of "roles" that she recognised in her intangible, rainbow-like personality, all in order to create the complex and ever-evolving character of Orlando. Thus she was able to re-discover and re-invent Sackville-West in the protagonist, similar to how Joyce re-invented himself in the character of Stephen Dedalus.

As I have already ascertained, *Portrait* and *Orlando* share an important similarity in that both protagonists are inspired by real-life people, places, and events. The main difference between the two novels, on the other hand, is Joyce and Woolf's treatment of the (auto)biographical form and structure. This difference is reflected in my discussions of the two texts by the fact that *Portrait*'s status as an autobiography has received much less attention than *Orlando*'s status as a biography. The reason for this is that, in terms of form and structure, *Orlando* is in greater possession of traditional biographical traits and techniques than *Portrait*. Woolf's project was to adapt a pseudo-biographical strategy to satirise the traditional form. Consequently, the novel is accurately labeled as a mock biography in which Woolf plays with the traditional generic traits. This is traceable on almost every page of the narrative. Woolf is thorough and consistent in her use of biographical genre-markers like a preface, an index, dates, references to real people and events, not to mention pictures of Sackville-West herself and members of her family. This reveals that Woolf's intention was to present her novel as a biography, however infused with fictional aspects. In *Orlando* she thus demonstrates her own theories described in "The New Biography" and "The Art of Biography". There is a thin line between truth and fiction, and it would be fruitful for the two

to co-exist. The “truth of reality” and the “truth of fiction”, however antagonistic terms, are in *Orlando* welded together to form an intricate and genre-challenging symbiosis.

If we can refer to *Orlando* as an example of a biographical novel on the basis of contents, form, and structure, the genre-play is more subtle in *Portrait*. On different occasions throughout my thesis, I have referred to Joyce’s novel as a “concealed autobiography”. The reason why, is that Joyce is never explicit in his play with the genre of autobiography. Rather, as his aim is to present the text as a novel, Joyce is making an effort to disguise the autobiographical aspects. My close reading has revealed that Joyce does not include any clear autobiographical characteristics in the narrative. *Portrait*’s formal structure cannot be associated with a traditional autobiography. Rather, it is considerably closer to that of a novel. The reason why readers of *Portrait* have always been tempted to view the book as an autobiography is most likely determined by the knowledge they possess about Joyce’s own adolescence and formative years in Dublin. The striking similarity between Joyce and Stephen cannot be ignored, as no effort is made to negate that there is any. Thus, in the case of *Portrait*, the autobiographical aspects have been included in, and almost consumed by, a novel structure which makes it impossible to view it exclusively as an autobiography.

The difference between *Portrait* and *Orlando* is further stressed by the role given to the narrator in the two texts. Both authors distanced themselves from their narratives, and the reader is never introduced to the narrative voice of either Joyce or Woolf. However, the two authors provided their narratives with two different kinds of narrators, which is one of the major and determining differences between the two alleged (auto)biographies. In *Portrait*, the narrative voice is not that of Joyce himself, as he refuses to incorporate the traditional autobiographical “I” into the narrative. Rather, he has Stephen narrate parts of his own story, along with a neutral third-person narrator. The reader is acquainted with the voice of the protagonist already on the first page, in the immature “baby talk” that opens the narrative. This rhetorical choice reflects Joyce’s continuous preoccupation with language. Joyce demonstrates this thoroughly in *Portrait*, where he applied to his text a modernist language that included long passages of free indirect discourse to reflect the personal, inner life of Stephen. As a result, the protagonist is equipped with a personal language that is always indicative of his age, and matures as he grows older. Throughout the narrative, Stephen’s language plays a significant part in portraying the protagonist’s maturation and personal growth, personally and as an artist. Stephen’s story as articulated in *Portrait* is truthful, albeit not in the way of the traditional Victorian biography. Joyce’s main concern is not with the portrayal of history, although its presence is necessary to form a realistic backdrop, but rather

with the history of Stephen himself. Consequently, this form of narrative negates the text's status as an autobiography, and underlines its status as a novel.

By contrast, the narrator of *Orlando* is easier to define. Early in the narrative, he is identified as a male "character" whose role is to be the biographer of the protagonist's extraordinary life. In addition, he is also an historian, tracing roughly 350 years of English history. And yet we have seen that although his requirements are set within a traditional framework, Woolf allows him to be re-invented according to her ideals presented in "The New Biography", and elaborated further on in "The Art of Biography". Equipped with a greater sense of freedom and independence, Woolf's biographer/historian satirises over the dry empirical data characteristic of the Victorian biography, and mocks the reader's expectations of a narrative filled with realism and facts verified by trustworthy witnesses. Nevertheless, Woolf never seizes to acknowledge the Victorian biography. She frequently refers to its traditional generic rules, before proceeding to openly manipulate and play with them. Thus, she sheds light on the biography as a genre of immense possibilities, and rejects the old notions that it is a genre of rigid rules and limitations. Thus, as I have argued, *Orlando* is not only as a critique of the traditional form, but also as a reflection upon it. As Woolf articulated for herself and her contemporary writers in "The New Biography", the biographer has seized to be only a chronicler, he/she has become an artist.

I conclude that Joyce and Woolf are successful in their attempts to transform the traditional nineteenth century novel by combining it with aspects of other established genres, such as the (auto)biography, bildungsroman and künstlerroman. Further, both authors contributed immensely to the re-shaping and re-evaluation of the novel in the early decades of the twentieth century. By opting for greater freedom, and less rules and restrictions, the authors allowed themselves to combine characteristics from several already established and well known genres in order to emancipate the novel from the conventions of the nineteenth century. Throughout my thesis, I have referred to *Portrait* and *Orlando* using terms like "anti-novel", "pseudo-biography", and "mock biography". These terms have all emerged due to the fact that the realistic (auto)biography and the fictional novel are in both texts so intricately executed that it is difficult for the reader to ascertain where one genre ends and the other one begins. Not only do both texts incorporate elements of multiple genres, but they are also further developed and skillfully manipulated to an extent that a new "hybrid genre", which I have coined "biograficton", has been established. Fidelity to one genre alone is not a priority in any of the narratives. In fact, both *Portrait* and *Orlando* are less inclined to stay faithful to the traditional rules and generic conventions than to present the reader with an interesting and

captivating story about the protagonist's formation of character and artistic consciousness, all set within the framework of an alleged (auto)biography. This interfusing of genres marks a large quantity of life writing in the modernist period, in addition to the manipulation of already existing genres. As my discussion has shown, the implications for the two texts status as "biografiction" are twofold.

First of all, both texts have clear novelistic traits in that they are both possessed of aspects that are undoubtedly fictitious, and, in the case of *Orlando*, even fantastic. Furthermore, *Portrait* and *Orlando* share a marked focus on their protagonists in a process of formation and development from childhood into maturity. Thus they acknowledge the Victorian novel, and the established tradition of the bildungsroman. However, in both narratives, the bildungsroman is further developed into its modernist equivalent, the künstlerroman. Thus, the authors enable themselves to portray the formative process of the artistic consciousness of Stephen and Orlando in a form that resembles the traditional bildungsroman, though it does so within a modernist context and aesthetic.

Second, the (auto)biographical aspects are intimately connected with the modernist project of Joyce and Woolf, since they are welded together with fiction to create a literary symbiosis that goes beyond the mere novel or (auto)biography. In both *Portrait* and *Orlando*, the (auto)biographical aspects are undeniably present, as we recognise Joyce himself in Stephen, and Vita Sackville-West in Orlando. Again, the two authors acknowledge an established literary tradition, but they both restrain from "plodding in the footprints of truth". Rather, they render the truth where they see fit, and proceed to fill the narrative gaps with fiction. They close the circle in terms of having the genre of the novel compliment that of (auto)biography, and the other way around. Thus they are able to create exactly the story they want to tell without having to claim fidelity to (auto)biography as a genre of absolute realism.

As my thesis has shown, the generic ambiguity in the two texts is intimately connected with the modernist project of Joyce and Woolf. In accordance with the spirit of the new age, they allow themselves to be experimental and innovative to ultimately achieve their common goal of emancipating themselves from the traditional rules and restrictions of genre. The result, however, is that the stability of the texts are shaken, as both are in possession of realistic and fictional aspects simultaneously. Here, we have arrived at the core of the matter. For how should the texts be categorized? As they to a large degree possess (auto)biographical characteristics, can they still be labeled as novels? And what was Joyce and Woolf's intention upon writing them?

My conclusion, which is based on my comparative reading of the two texts, is that *Portrait* is more resemblant of the traditional nineteenth century novel than *Orlando*. This is not to say that it is conventional in form and content. On the contrary, Joyce's modernist aesthetic is traceable in the entire narrative, from the language that reflects Stephen's character and stage of maturity to the skillful selection of events from his own life which are woven into a novel structure. The fact that the bildungsroman is gradually relieved by the künstlerroman is a testimony to Joyce's subtle artistry. The autobiographical aspects of the novel also complement its status as a künstlerroman, as the theme of the latter is tightly linked to the real-life youthful experiences of Joyce. As his brother, Stanislaus, firmly stated in his diary, *Portrait* is not an autobiography, it is a novel. And, which is more, it is an artistic creation. Joyce inserts aspects of autobiography into the novel structure as he believes it to be a subject of interest, but he never compromises his project of writing a novel. It is also important to remember that *Portrait*, with its publication in 1914-15 is considered to be an early modernist novel. At this point, Joyce has not even reached the stage in his career when he was the most experimental. Consequently, it can be argued that *Portrait* paved the way for *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

This assertion leads me to an insight about *Orlando* as well. As we have seen, similar to *Portrait*, Woolf's text also merges realism with fiction, and the bildungsroman with the künstlerroman. Woolf's project is to reconfigure both the novel and the biography to better reflect real life the way it was lived, and thus to write without limitations. The fact that Woolf also re-configured the biography according to the modernist aesthetic enabled a greater presence of fictional aspects in the narrative. The result is a text possessed of an intricate combination of two genres that traditionally would have mutually excluded each other. Thus, *Orlando* poses a generic paradox. The fantastic elements of the narrative mark it as highly unrealistic novel. Simultaneously, Woolf demonstrates her keen insight into the generic rules and conventions of the traditional Victorian biography by providing the narrative with all the typical assets of said genre. Concluding, *Orlando*'s structure insists on the text's status as a biography, while it still remains a novel in terms of content. What Woolf ultimately managed to do with the biographical form was turning it into fiction.

Having asserted and demonstrated that both *Orlando* and *Portrait* to various degrees are marked by their generic ambiguity, I am led to a further conclusion. Due to the presence of fictional aspects in both texts, to label them as (auto)biographies would be inaccurate. Rather, the generic ambiguity functions as a catalyst for a new method of fiction writing, which is why I find it is more valid to label the texts primarily as novels. In a larger context,

modernism as a literary period represented, above all else, evolution and development. *Portrait* and *Orlando* can both be read as criticism of the previous forms, yet they can also be considered as reflections of those forms. Joyce and Woolf both recognised the importance of re-evaluation of the old standards, as a new day and age called for a “new” literature. Like Orlando in Woolf’s novel, literature too has to adapt to the spirit of the age. Hence, the evolution of the novel in the twentieth century has to a large degree been determined by the modernist period, as the unconventional has gradually become the conventional. Throughout my thesis, I have stressed that the contemporary critics of *Portrait* and *Orlando* considered them to be quite unconventional, and even confusing in terms of genre. Today, on the other hand, not only are the texts undoubtedly labeled as novels, they are also seen as more conventional than when they were first published at the beginning of the twentieth century. Consequently, my perspective as a twenty-first century reader allows me to label the two texts as novels.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind the fact that Joyce and Woolf, in *Portrait* and *Orlando*, did more than merely write against and critique the previous forms. Although we have seen that both works are imbued with considerable amounts of irony and satire, they are also highly self-reflective and self-problematising works of literature that reach beyond the mere “anti-novel” and “mock biography”. They are Joyce and Woolf’s own modernist contributions to, as well as comments on, the evolution of the novel. In the opening quote of my thesis, Woolf stated that human character changed on or about December 1910. Now, a hundred years on, history has proven that modernism altered the course of English literature forever.

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